

**University of Central Lancashire**

**Unreserved Minutes of the Board Meeting Held on 21<sup>st</sup> May 2021 commencing at 10.00am**

**Present (via video-conference):**

David Taylor (Chair)

Fiona Armstrong  
Graham Baldwin  
Zuleika Chikh  
Nicky Danino  
Jim Edney

Ridwanah Gurjee  
Sue Ion  
Lesley Lloyd  
Ruth Lowry  
Lorraine Norris

**Also in attendance (via video-conference):**

Michael Ahern (Chief Information and Infrastructure Officer)  
George Charles (Chief Finance Officer)  
Ruth Connor (Chief Marketing Officer)  
Ian Fisher (University Secretary and General Counsel and Clerk to the Board)  
Ken Lee (Chief People Officer)  
Lynne Livesey (Deputy Vice Chancellor)  
Peter McMellon (assisting the Clerk to the Board)  
Lisa Atty (Governance Support Officer)  
Fiona Winters (Deputy Clerk to the Board)  
Carolyn Johnson (Executive Officer to Vice Chancellor)  
Jon Russ (Students' Union - Interim Chief Executive) - UB927 only  
Alex Bone (Students' Union - Director of Communications and Membership) - UB927 only

**UB922. Welcome and Apologies**

The Chair welcomed all present to the meeting.

Apologies for absence had been received from Mrs Adams, Mr Hext, Mrs McCarthy and Mr McQueen.

**UB923. Declaration of Interests**

There were no declarations of interests other than those recorded under UB931 below.

**UB924. Chair's Announcements**

The Chair reported that a number of Board Members had indicated to him their preference for a return to 'in person' meetings of the Board and its Committees. In noting (and sharing) that preference, the Chair confirmed that, as soon as guidelines enabled a return to 'in person' meetings, arrangements would be made for meetings to be convened on that basis. Unfortunately, it seems most unlikely that meetings 'in person' will be enabled before

the commencement of the 2021/22 academic year. It was noted that the current expectation is that meetings 'in person' will have been re-instated in time for the November 2022 Away-Days to take place on that basis.

**UB925. Reserved and Unreserved Minutes of the University Board Meeting held on 25<sup>th</sup> March 2021**

**Resolved:** That the Reserved and Unreserved Minutes of the University Board Meeting held on 25<sup>th</sup> March 2021 were agreed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

**UB926. Matters Arising from the University Board Meeting held on 25<sup>th</sup> March 2021**

**Reserved Minute - Text Redacted**

*(Mr A Bone and Mr J Russ joined the meeting at this point)*

**UB927. Students' Union Strategy - 2021-2024**

Ms Chikh presented the Students' Union Strategy 2021-2024. A copy of the Strategy is set out in the Minute Book.

Mr J Russ (Interim SU Chief Executive) then commented on the document production process and on the key points which underpinned the document now presented.

With over 1000 students participating in the Members' Survey, a broadly representative sample of views and expectations had been obtained. Consistent with the survey findings, delivery of the Strategy will be set across three 'segments' - Student Voice, Student Life and Student Community.

Within the Student Voice segment, Key Insights had enabled identification of objectives linked to Academic Representation, University Transparency and School connections, with corresponding 'How to measure success' indicators.

Within the Student Life segment, Key Insights had enabled identification of objectives linked to Stress and Struggles, Part-time Work and Benefits, with success measures.

Within the Student Community segment, Key Insights had enabled identification of objectives linked to Sense of Belonging, Help on Your Journey and Friendship, with success measures.

Ms Chikh commented that her own direct experience as life as a student at UCLan - and including the exceptional experiences of the pandemic-affected periods - had enabled her to confirm the relevance and importance of factors now covered by the identified objectives. The need to improve on the 59% who Agree /Strongly Agree in response to the 'Strong sense of community' statement is a priority.

Mr Russ then drew attention to the Strategy Enablers, pointing to the work of the University's Recovery Group as an example under the Partnership enabler. He also explained that, while the Students' Union recognised and appreciated that the bulk of funding was the annual grant from the University, efforts to boost funding by generating income from other sources (eg., sales of food/drink at SU outlets) now need to pick up again as normal use of the campus is re-established. Under the Communication & Digital strategy enabler, the SU now has a new website and a new customer relations management

approach. Finally, Mr Russ advised on the membership of SU's Board of Trustees and on the backgrounds of the current trustees.

Mrs Lloyd suggested that, alongside the Strategy, the SU website should ensure that the SU's very positive involvement with the UCLan Board should be highlighted. She also asked about the Graduate Support provisions and the extent of the SU's involvement. Ms Chikh advised on the SU's involvement (including supporting students who had graduated and now sought employment) and with the UCLan Propeller Hub.

In response to Dr Ion's question as to whether the UCLan Board might be able to provide further support towards attainment of the SU Strategy objectives, Mr Russ suggested that any help towards enabling the SU to generate more income/funding would be appreciated. This might be achieved by, for example, involving the SU in the review of the University's catering arrangements.

Dr Armstrong considered that the SU Strategy was both realistic and ambitious. The extent to which the SU and the University contribute to the communities around the campuses should not be underplayed. Ms Chikh agreed and pointed to the aim to promote involvement of students in voluntary work within the community.

Regarding the aim to engender the 'sense of belonging', the Chair reminded the Board that a key objective behind the University's massive investment in the Masterplan - and now evident in the new Student Centre, The Square, OASIS and elsewhere - was to promote the sense of belonging and student wellbeing.

The Chair thanked Ms Chikh and her colleagues for the excellent presentation. He considered that the new Strategy ran consistently with the Board's own objectives for promotion of the Student Voice. The Board continued to value good relations with the Students' Union.

**Resolved:** That the report on the Students' Union Strategy 2021-2024 be received.

*(Mr Bone and Mr Russ left the meeting at this point)*

## **UB928. Vice-Chancellor's Report**

Professor Baldwin presented his report. A copy of the report is set out in the Minute Book.

Professor Baldwin commented on his report as follows:

*(i) Students returning to campus*

The Government had authorised the return to campus of all remaining students from 17<sup>th</sup> May 2021, but, unfortunately, most UCLan courses had finished by that date. The University had responded by providing a series of enrichment activities and the campus did now seem somewhat busier. Many of UCLan's students had already returned to campus or accommodation ahead of 17<sup>th</sup> May 2021. The University's 'free food' offer has been extremely popular and the arrangement has contributed to the on campus re-integration process. Although the arrangement has now ended, the position will be monitored.

*(ii) Visits to Campus - Potential Future Students*

Arrangements are in hand for traditional on campus open events in June 2021, with provisions for on-line alternatives in the event of any reversal of the return to normal schedule.

*(iii) Students' Return in September 2021*

While it is recognised that Government details on the September 2021 return are only likely to be available at the end of June 2021, arrangements at UCLan are being made for the resumption of traditional 'in person' delivery of learning in all areas. There will still be some on-line provision, but, largely in response to the preferences expressed by the student body, 'face to face' teaching will be the norm from the commencement of the 2021-22 academic year.

*(iv) Staff Return to Campus*

Several groups of staff have already commenced the return to working on campus process, obviously with strict adherence to Covid 19 safety arrangements. Most of the remaining staff who have been working from home (WFH) will revert to at least part working on campus. The HR Team is liaising with line management across the University in establishing optimal arrangements for each area, with a '3 days on campus/2 days WFH' expected to ensure that much-needed 'life around campus' is assured.

*(v) Cyber Attack*

As confirmed under UB926 above, the incident at UCLan has been effectively managed. However, elsewhere in the HE sector, serious problems continue to be experienced, with attacks appearing to be timed so as to impact on institutions at vulnerable points in the academic year (e.g. student return dates).

*(vi) The Queen's Speech*

Further detail on the proposed creation of a 'Director of Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom' position at the OfS (Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill) is awaited. As regards the Government's Skills and Post-16 Education Bill, UCLan will continue to explore closer links with Preston's College (as previously reported) and also with Cardinal Newman, Burnley and Myerscough Colleges.

*(vii) Student Tuition Fees*

There continues to be media speculation around Government intentions to impose reduced maximum tuition fee levels, with £7,500 identified as a likely upper limit for non-STEM courses. It is probable that this matter will only be covered under the next Comprehensive Spending Review, but, in the meantime, the Finance Team at UCLan has commenced scenario planning in order to assess the impact of income reduction in the event of any capping of tuition fees.

In response to Mr Edney's question, Professor Baldwin confirmed that any such change to fee levels could only be effective from the 2022/23 academic year at the earliest.

*(viii) Reserved Minute - Text Redacted*

*(ix) Reserved Minute - Text Redacted*

*(x) Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (TEF)*

In recognition of the challenge which further improvement in TEF rating represents, the need for the best data lies behind the creation of and recent appointment to UCLan's new Head of Data and Policy Insight position. Better data availability should also assist in improvements to National Student Survey (NSS), student retention and graduate outcomes performance.

*(xi) Student Hardship*

The University has received a further £252,000 from the Department for Education to support students who were unable to return to campus in April. The University has itself identified £400,000 for further support during the remainder of the current academic year.

*(xii) Reserved Minute - Text Redacted*

*(xiii) Reserved Minute - Text Redacted*

*(xiv) New Strategic Plan*

Work is now proceeding on revisions to key Performance Indicators and on enabling/supporting sub-strategies. It is intended that arrangements will be made for a special review session by the Board ahead of the formal launch of the new Strategic Plan in Summer 2021.

*(xv) Reserved Minute - Text Redacted*

Mrs Lloyd had noted UCLan interest in the Levelling Up funding. Professor Baldwin confirmed the extent of the University's current involvement and its monitoring of developments on this front.

In response to Dr Ion's comment on UCLan's place 'within the bottom 50% for IP and commercialisation' (Knowledge Exchange Framework), Professor Baldwin confirmed that this performance needed to be strengthened in order that more could be made of the University's intellectual wealth.

Mrs Lowry had noted information on the University's operations in Burnley. Professor Baldwin confirmed that there already exists a strategy with development plans for UCLan's operations in East Lancashire and that these will be shared with the Board in due course.

The Chair reminded the Board that, prior to the pandemic interruption, the Board's practice of holding meetings in the different campuses had been recognised as a valuable practice and that this arrangement, once re-instituted should include UCLan's sites in Burnley and Blackburn.

The Chair thanked Professor Baldwin for his comprehensive update.

**Resolved:** That the Vice-Chancellor's Update Report be received.

**UB929. Reserved Minute - Text Redacted**

**UB930. Chief Finance Officer's Update**

Reserved Minute - Text Redacted

*- External Audit Plan for 2020-21 accounts*

The Audit Committee examined and approved the External Auditor's plan for auditing the University's 2020-21 accounts. The Committee discussed the risk areas which will be the focus of the audit. The 'interim audit' is expected to commence in the week commencing 21<sup>st</sup> June 2021.

*- 2021-22 Budget Process*

The budget-setting process is ongoing and the VCG undertook a detailed review of a draft budget on 4<sup>th</sup> May 2021 before confirming the next stages in the process. As already mentioned (UB 929 above) a strategy similar to the previous year's approach is being applied, using scenarios covering a range of income impacts, against the assumption that income from tuition fees will be similar to the levels of the current year.

There will continue to be tight controls to ensure that expenditure is in line with actual income. Some expenditure will be called for to meet the costs of events such as graduation ceremonies which have been delayed from the previous year.

Account is also being taken of the implications of the new Strategic Plan. However, it is still intended that the proposed budget for 2021-22 will provide for another year end surplus.

Mr Charles indicated how the budget-setting process would address the undoubtedly higher than usual inflationary pressure on both staffing costs and on consumables and equipment.

Dr Ion was pleased to note that consecutive years of year-end surplus were planned. However, she reminded University Management about perceptions around both income strip and the new pensions scheme and the consequent need for effective optics and communications.

Mr Edney agreed that the circumstances in which the 2021-22 budget was being set includes several unknowns, including the nature of the inflationary effects now being experienced. He intended that the Resources Committee should seek to identify and take into account all risks and, to that end, the scenario planning approach should provide the necessary options and flexibility.

The Chair thanked Mr Charles and the VCG for their continuing attention to the University's financial performance.

**Resolved:** That the Finance Report be received.

## **UB931. Pensions Update**

Interests were declared in respect of this item as follows:

- Mr Edney, Mr Fisher, Mrs Lowry and Mrs Norris – Members of the Local Government Pension Fund with no financial interest relating to the University’s membership of the fund.
- Mr Ahern, Mr Charles, Mrs Johnson, Mr Lee, Ms Atty and Mr McMellon - Members of the Local Government Pension Fund as employees of the University.

Mr Lee reported on progress towards the introduction of the new pension scheme for non-academic staff. With the assistance of Mercers, seven potential external providers have been identified and it is expected that four of those providers will confirm their interest. Mercers will also assist with the shortlisting and the identification of ‘essential criteria’ including past performance in the delivery of similar services. As things stand, the new scheme will commence as planned from 1<sup>st</sup> August 2021.

Mr Lee advised that consultation with the Joint Unions had commenced and that, while Unite appeared not to have any concerns about the new scheme, UNISON had referred the matter to their national body.

Mr Lee then drew attention to the advice on eligibility (of UCLan’s existing staff) to join the new scheme. The legal advice received indicated that the LGPS should remain as an option for the 127 existing staff who are currently eligible to join that scheme. Those employees will therefore be auto-enrolled in due course (with the usual option to opt out).

Mr Edney advised that the Resources Committee has consistently urged that effective, direct communications with staff should be prepared. Mr Lee confirmed that, while the new scheme is expected to attract predominantly new staff, existing staff will also be eligible to join the new scheme. Attention to communications will particularly ensure that junior staff receive guidance on pensions options.

The Chair reminded the Board about the concerns which Mr Hext had voiced in the past.

**Resolved:** That the pensions update be received.

## **UB932. Gender Pay Gap Reporting**

Mr Lee presented the report on Gender Pay Gap Reporting. A copy of the report is set out in the Minute Book.

Mr Lee reminded the Board about the University’s duty to publish such a report each year, although the duty had been suspended in 2020 as a result of the global pandemic. The annual report will once again be published on the University website and also be forwarded to the Office for Students. He reminded the Board about the difference between gender pay gap reporting and ‘equal pay for the same value worker’ reporting.

UCLan’s place near the median position (sector and nationally) has not changed since the last report. However, it remains the objective to continue to close the gap. To achieve further improvement, female representation in graded (as opposed to basic) posts will be required. It is expected that the greater flexibility afforded under the post-Covid return to work arrangements will support female employees in accessing graded positions. Mr Lee also pointed out that the University’s decision to pay the voluntary Living Wage (rather than only the Minimum Wage) will also contribute to gender pay gap reduction.

In response to Ms Chikh's question, Mr Lee advised that, although the current report does not extend to 'ethnicity', this may well change in the future. In any event, the University is already looking into best practice in combining ethnicity considerations and Mr Lee intended reporting on options in due course.

**Resolved:** That the outcomes of the gender pay gap analysis be noted.

## **UB933. Committee Chairs' Update**

### **Audit Committee**

Mrs Lowry (Chair of Audit Committee) reported on the matters covered by the Committee at the meeting on 29<sup>th</sup> April 2021. She commented on the Committee's review of the most recent University Risk Register and the general view that concentration of a reduced number of key risks seemed a sound approach for the management of the University's prospects. The advice provided by the Internal Auditor (RSM) on 'risk maturity' had been noted. The involvement of the University Secretary and General Counsel in the VCG's oversight of the Risk Register had also been noted.

There had been a very acceptable ('substantial assurance') outcome from the recent internal audit of the University's Early Intervention Model arrangements and the process had commenced for identification of subjects to be covered under the 2021-22 Internal Audit Plan. There had been good progress on the resolution of a number of ageing internal audit 'actions'.

As mentioned under UB930 above, a full review of the external audit plan for the 2020-21 accounts had been undertaken. KPMG had also provided a useful HE sector benchmarking report which had subsequently been distributed to all Board members.

Finally, the Committee had obtained considerable reassurance from the report on the Cyber Attack recovery exercise which Mr Ahern had provided.

### **Resources Committee**

Mr Edney (Chair of Resources Committee) reported on the matters covered by the Committee at the meeting on 5<sup>th</sup> May 2021. He confirmed that many of the matters reviewed by the Committee had already been addressed earlier in today's Board meeting under the agenda items on the University's budget and financial controls, student recruitment and pensions. The Committee had also reviewed the position with regards to UCLan's operations in Cyprus.

In addition to those matters, the Committee had noted progress on the reviews of key HR policies and procedures to which Mr McQueen and Mrs McCarthy had both provided useful contributions.

Mr Fisher also advised the Board that, in addition to the formal meeting on 5<sup>th</sup> May 2021, the Committee had also dealt with an urgent matter relating the University's Westlakes Research Limited subsidiary.



## **Environmental Working Group**

Mrs Lloyd confirmed that she had chaired the inaugural meeting of the new Environmental Working Group on 28<sup>th</sup> April 2021. The Working Group had agreed terms of reference which included consideration of climate and bio-diversity matters.

Mrs Lloyd advised that new mandatory reporting requirements for large companies in the UK would require arrangements to be in place by 2023. Full details of the reporting expectations are not yet known but these are likely to include plans for and progress towards de-carbonisation. The University's internal and external auditors are both closely monitoring environment protection performance and promise to be useful sources of guidance and benchmarking.

The Working Group clearly recognised the wide range of challenges and implications for the University, and an accurate and independent assessment of UCLan's existing carbon footprint will serve to allow measurement of progress. In due course, an away-day session with the Board would allow more detailed reporting and debate on this key topic.

Dr Ion, who together with Mr Edney and Mrs McCarthy had attended the Working Group's first meeting, commended the intention to develop a true and auditable 'baseline'. The University has already made much impressive progress and this should be acknowledged and recorded.

The Chair agreed, adding that every aspect of progress under the 'environment protection' head also served to contribute to an improved working and studying environment for staff and students as well as for the wider community. He urged that, given tendencies elsewhere to make false claims of environmental improvement (he gave examples relating to plastic recycling), development of an authentic baseline and measurement of progress system were very important. Mr Ahern confirmed that there were many inauthentic claims of improvements, including in the HE sector. At UCLan, discussions at VCG had emphasised the importance of genuine progress only with no shifting of the burden elsewhere. Mr Edney also stressed the importance of responsible recognition of appropriate practices and interfaces with all other parties and contributors.

In response to Dr Armstrong's observation about the wealth of expertise within the University, Mr Ahern agreed that, while there are valuable contributions from some quarters, more could be made of expertise and research potential.

**Resolved:** That the Chairs' Updates be noted.

## **UB934. Masterplan Delivery Update**

Mr Ahern presented the Masterplan Delivery Update report dated 7<sup>th</sup> May 2021. A copy of the report is set out in the Minute Book.

Mr Ahern provided details on a particular matter which required resolution before the University would accept handover of the nearly completed Student Centre. His team required resolution of a building ventilation issue in order that the standard of the project's original 'well building' design might be fully met. Despite this matter, the new facilities will be available in good time, along with the completed University Square and the associated Highways work. He confirmed that the budget underspend was being used to develop the Central Spine improvement and also to allow for the reversing of the Library/LIS main entrance to the opposite face of the building.

In summary, the new facilities represented a major improvement to the campus. The next challenges will include bringing the rest of the Preston campus up to a similar standard and this will be covered in the Estates sub-strategy of the new Strategic Plan.

Finally, Mr Ahern reported on the successful transfer from the Westleigh site to the new roof garden of the Student Centre of the bee-hives and the honey production facilities.

**Resolved :** That the Masterplan Update Report be noted.

## **UB935. Any Other Business**

### **(i) Recent research and commentaries on the menopause**

Mrs Lloyd suggested that, with so much current attention being given to the menopause, ongoing considerations needed to be recognised and taken into account by the University.

Mr Lee advised on developments under the equality and diversity head which were currently receiving attention. These included extended time off work following pregnancy and general acknowledgment of complex issues linked to the menopause.

### **(ii) ALUSID Limited**

The Chair reported on his recent first-hand experience of the excellent progress being made by the University's spin-out company, ALUSID Ltd, in the development of tiles made entirely from recycled materials. He recommended that Board members should visit the ALUSID website.

It was agreed that some demonstration of the company's product should be considered for incorporation into feature(s) of the new Student Centre. Mrs Connor also undertook to direct her team to using the subsidiary's significant step into mainstream tiles production in the University's publicity.

### **(iii) Chair's Closing Comments**

On behalf of the Board, the Chair thanked all present for their continuing contribution to the effective management of the University during these particularly demanding times.

## **UB936. Date and Time of Next Meeting**

It was agreed that the next meeting of the Board would be at 10.00am on Thursday, 1<sup>st</sup> July 2021.

**I M Fisher**  
**Clerk to the Board**