University of Central Lancashire

Unreserved Minutes of the Board Meeting Held on 24th March 2022 commencing at 10.00am at Victoria Mill, Burnley

Present:

David Taylor (Chair)

Graham Baldwin	Lesley Lloyd (via MS Teams)
Zuleikha Chikh	Ruth Lowry
Nicky Danino	Anne McCarthy
Jim Edney	Bill McQueen

Richard Hext (via MS Teams) - to UB1014(ii)

In attendance :

Ebrahim Adia (Pro Vice Chancellor – Academic Leadership) – to UB 1012
George Charles (Chief Finance Officer)
Ruth Connor (Deputy Chief Executive)
Ian Fisher (University Secretary and General Counsel and Clerk to the Board)
Ken Lee (Chief People Officer)
Carolyn Johnson (Executive Officer to the Vice Chancellor)
Peter McMellon (assisting the Clerk to the Board)

UB1007. Welcome and Apologies

The Chair welcomed all present to the meeting including Mr Hext and Mrs Lloyd who were joining the meeting via MS Teams.

Apologies for absence had been received from Dr Armstrong, Dr Gurjee, Dr Ion and Mrs Norris. The Chair reported that e-mail comments would be passed on to appropriate Vice Chancellor's Group member(s) and/or fed into the Board's discussions.

UB1008. Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interests other than those recorded under UB1017 below.

UB1009. Chair's Announcements

There were no Chair's announcements.

UB1010. Reserved and Unreserved Minutes of the University Board Meeting held on 3rd February 2022

Resolved: That the Reserved and Unreserved Minutes of the University Board Meeting held on 3rd February 2022 were agreed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

UB1011. RESERVED MINUTE – TEXT REDACTED

UB1012. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Annual Report 2020-21

Professor Adia presented the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Annual Report. A copy of the Annual Report is set out in the Minute Book.

Professor Adia confirmed that, in general, all key indicators in the Report showed progress towards the University's EDI goals. He confirmed that, with regard to the significant increase in full-time disabled students (from 17% in 2019-20 to 26% in 2020-21), it is expected that the investigation into that increase will confirm that improved recording systems as well as effective recruitment campaigns will account for the reported increase.

Professor Adia reported that a new EDI Strategy had been launched and that energies were now directed to the embedding of that Strategy, with Faculties and Professional Services expected to take into account the targets in the Strategy. EDI Leads have been identified in each Faculty. He commented on the Academic Board's contribution to promoting the EDI Strategy and added that development of the University's research culture and impact will increasingly embrace EDI considerations.

Finally, Professor Adia added that the appointment of Mrs Norris as the Board's EDI Lead was a further positive step in the promotion of the University's EDI objectives.

In responding to Mrs McCarthy's comment on the gap between the overall staff profile and the corresponding student profile (including the Burnley Campus profiles), Mr Lee confirmed that the low rate of staff turn-over at UCLan was recognised by the Staff Profile Working Group as a contributing factor to the challenge. However, other positive action measures were under consideration together with work on the staff recruitment process, mentoring and training. Mr Lee felt that it was very difficult to produce general solutions, although such measures as anonymised CVs had already been introduced. He did not expect that the impact of new approaches would be evident until 2-3 years from now.

It was noted that Mrs McCarthy and Mr Lee intended discussing acceleration tactics outside the meeting.

Ms Chikh considered that the Annual Report was an excellent reflection of the progress made at UCLan. She did, however, wonder whether an increase in operation of 'open plan' working environments (such as that in the Student Centre) might serve to promote inclusivity. Mr Lee advised that conversion costs would tend to limit such adaptations to working environments but he agreed that this should be a consideration in estates development plans.

Mrs Lloyd reported on the mentoring discussion at the recent Academic Board meeting. She advised that she intended having follow-up discussions with Professor Ireland (Pro Vice Chancellor – Students and Teaching).

In response to Mrs Lloyd's further point about the EDI profile of the Board itself, Professor Adia commented on the discussion at the recent meeting of the Governance, Risk and Nominations Committee when various steps to enhance Board membership diversity had been identified.

Resolved: That the content of the draft EDI Annual Report be approved and that, following final proof-reading and formatting, the Report be placed in the public domain.

UB1013. RESERVED MINUTE – TEXT REDACTED

UB1014. Vice-Chancellor's Update

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

Professor Baldwin advised that, on some matters, there had been further developments since distribution of his report. He then commented further on the following:

(i) **RESERVED MINUTE – TEXT REDACTED**

(Mr Hext left the meeting at this point)

(ii) Augar Review

The DfE's belated response to the Augar Review means that institutions are now receiving confirmation of the measures being applied to the sector.

- the changes to student loans seem regressive although the reduction in interest rate is welcomed.

- student fees will be capped at £9250 for two more years. The 2012 value of that amount is now around £7000, given subsequent costs and inflation increases. Fortunately, UCLan's successes in International student recruitment have assisted the University in managing the Home fees level restriction. Elsewhere in the sector, institutions have been less successful in financial management terms with the financial position of around 40 institutions now being monitored by OfS.

- UCLan will contribute to the ongoing consultation on Student Numbers Controls and Minimum Eligibility Requirements (student loan access).

Professor Baldwin commented further on the Universities Minister's perceptions and also on the 'new funding' features of the Government's response. It should not be expected that the additional funding will make much difference to the increasing financial challenges.

On a positive note, Foundation years at UCLan can continue and the proposed reduction to Foundation Year tuition fees will not affect UCLan.

In summary, the Government's response so far has not been as problematic as had been feared.

(iii) Teaching Excellence Framework

UCLan is contributing to the ongoing consultation on the proposed changes to gradings/ratings. Based on the data and evidence at present, it seems likely that UCLan would currently receive a 'bronze' rating.

(iv) **RESERVED MINUTE – TEXT REDACTED**

(v) Blended Working Review

It has been confirmed that Professional Services staff must attend campus on a minimum of three (out of five) working days per week and that office cover must be ensured across the week. The impending Conditions Survey of premises will allow an assessment of current space utilisation and this may result in pilot 'shared working spaces' as an alternative to the traditional office usage currently operated.

(vi) Student Progression and Achievement

The most recent HESA data confirms improvements at UCLan. However, the sector benchmark has also increased. The VCG and the Senior Management Team continue to monitor progress against the improvement action plan.

The Chair thanked Professor Baldwin for his report.

Ms Chikh suggested that, in the current economic climate, students are more likely than ever to need support. It was also important that staff be vigilant in identifying early signs of student need. Professor Baldwin confirmed that the University will continue to operate the Student Hardship Fund to meet such needs.

Ms Chikh also drew attention to the accommodation needs of the families of students who are newly arriving to study in Burnley. Mrs Connor confirmed that arrangements are in hand for consideration to be given to sign-posting where assistance is available. It is intended that advice will be provided in advance of arrival and at the beginning of studies.

In response to Mrs Lowry's question about plans for the University's Westlakes operations, Professor Baldwin advised on current considerations and options relating to utilisation of the Westlakes premises. In broad terms, the University is looking to expand its activities at the Westlakes campus.

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

UB1015. RESERVED MINUTE – TEXT REDACTED

UB1016. RESERVED MINUTE – TEXT REDACTED

UB1017. RESERVED MINUTE – TEXT REDACTED

UB1018. Committee and Working Group Chairs' Updates

(i) Resources Committee

RESERVED MINUTE – TEXT REDACTED

- The Quarter 2 Forecast had been examined.
- The arrangements in place to ensure that fees and awards proposals (for 2023) are soundly compiled were reviewed and endorsed.
- The news on International students recruitment was well received.
- **RESERVED MINUTE – TEXT REDACTED**

(ii) Governance, Risk and Nominations Committee

Mr Taylor, as Chair of the Governance, Risk and Nominations Committee reported on matters covered by the Committee at the meeting on 2nd March 2022. These included the following:

- Advice was provided by Professor Adia and Mr Pradeep Passi (Director of EDI) on tactics which might be applied in the attempt to ensure wider diversity in the Board's membership during the forthcoming process to recruit new members.

- A new Risk Management Policy was approved. This included a statement on 'risk appetite'. The Committee also reviewed the risks and mitigatory measures in the current University Risk Register and agreed with the risk ratings and the overall coverage of the risks listed. The Committee indicated that, as regards risk appetite, at present, a cautious line should generally be applied.

- A minor alteration was made to the draft Value for Money Statement but otherwise the draft was agreed to be sound and fit for purpose.

- The Committee was content that the University meets all current compliance and consultation expectations. It was noted that a further 120 pages of new compliance requirements will take effect from 1st May 2022.

(iii) RESERVED MINUTE – TEXT REDACTED

UB1019. Academic Board Meeting on 23rd March 2022 – Update

Mrs Lloyd reported that the agenda at the last meeting of the Academic Board had been extremely full, covering several challenging matters. The Academic Board had nonetheless worked through all the matters and dealt efficiently with all the issues.

Mrs Lloyd added that an analysis showing key data on all courses would be an interesting and useful basis for review – possibly at a residential event – by the University Board. Professor Baldwin noted Mrs Lloyd's suggestion.

The Chair thanked Mrs Lloyd for her report, and Dr Ion and herself for their representation of the Board at meetings of the Academic Board.

Resolved: That the report on the Academic Board meeting on 23rd March 2022 be noted.

UB1020. Any Other Business

Tour of Burnley Campus

Mr Fisher confirmed that, immediately following the meeting, there would be a brief presentation followed by a tour of the University's Burnley Campus for all Board members.

UB1021. Date and Time of Next Meeting

Resolved: That the next meeting be at 2.00pm on Thursday, 19th May 2022 as part of the two-day residential event at the Belsfield Hotel, Bowness-on-Windermere.

In response to Mrs Lowry's request for early confirmation of the dates for Board and Committee meetings for 2022-23, Mr Fisher advised that the 2022-23 meetings schedule will be circulated in due course.

I M Fisher
Clerk to the Board