

University of Central Lancashire
Unreserved Minutes of the Board Meeting Held on 30th March 2023 commencing at
5.00pm in room 105, 2nd Floor, Student Centre, Preston

Present:

David Taylor (Chair)

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

Also in attendance:

George Charles (Chief Finance Officer)
Ruth Connor (Deputy Chief Executive)
Ian Allison (Executive Director of Digital Transformation) (in part)
Andrew Ireland (Pro Vice-Chancellor (Students and Teaching)) (in part)
StJohn Crean (Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research & Enterprise)) (in part)
Ian Fisher (University Secretary and General Counsel and Clerk to the Board)
Ken Lee (Chief People Officer)
Fiona Winters (Deputy Clerk to the Board)
Carolyn Johnson (Executive Officer to the Vice-Chancellor)

*attendance via video-conference

UB1100. Welcome and Apologies

Apologies for absence had been received from Mr Hext.

UB1101. Declaration of Interests

There were no new declarations of interests.

UB1102. Chair's Announcements

There were no Chair's announcements.

UB1103. Reserved and Unreserved Minutes of the University Board Meeting held on 2nd February 2023

The Reserved and Unreserved Minutes were agreed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

UB1104. Matters Arising

It was agreed that there were no matters arising not covered elsewhere on the Agenda of the meeting.

UB1105. Reserved Minute - Text Redacted

UB1106. Vice-Chancellor's Report

A copy of the report is set out in the Minute book. In presenting his report, Professor Baldwin explained that the content was self-explanatory and largely for noting and, therefore, he would focus on matters in which there have been recent developments.

Before doing so, Professor Baldwin formally congratulated the Chair on his impending installation as High Sheriff of Lancashire.

With regard to the external environment, the Vice-Chancellor confirmed that the situation remained highly challenging. These challenges included the continuing effective reduction in the value of UK student fees, difficult UK recruitment, the potential for geo-political risks to impact on international recruitment all remained as significant risks. Professor Baldwin also confirmed that Mr Charles would provide more details on the financial challenges at the Board Residential event in April.

Professor Baldwin reported that the University continued to lobby and make representations etc to key stakeholders and updated the Board on a recent event attended by the Secretary of State for Education at which he was able to speak to Gillian Keegan about a number of important issues, including the importance of Apprenticeships and the Government's concern about student "debt".

Reserved Minute - Text Redacted

With regard to recruitment, Professor Baldwin reported that the Offer Holders Days were going well and that the numbers remain similar to last year. The position of potential visa restrictions on international students was still uncertain.

Finally, Professor Baldwin reported that the UCLan Rugby League team had won the British Universities trophy at the recent sports finals day. The event was held at Nottingham University and the UCLan team beat the host University in the final and had also been promoted to the Premier League. Professor Baldwin also highlighted that the team had a female coach. There was further sporting success for UCLan as the University team beat the Edge Hill University team in the annual varsity competition.

In thanking the Vice-Chancellor for his report, Mr J Baldwin expressed concern about the tone of some commentators and politicians when discussing international students. Professor Baldwin agreed and highlighted the evidence collected by UUK on the benefits of international students and the polling evidence showing clearly that there was no public concern about the level of international students.

In response to a question from Mrs Lloyd about the potential need for further training on the Prevent Duty, Mr Fisher agreed to check the current position and report back as necessary.

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

UB1107. Chief Finance Officer's Update

The Chief Finance Officer presented his report, a copy of which is set out in the Minute book.

Mr Charles explained that he would take his report as read but wished to draw the attention of the Board to the following:

Firstly, Mr Charles highlighted the rise in income, largely as a result of the increase in the number of international students. However, unfortunately this increase had been more than offset by a rise in expenditure leading to the projected increase in the deficit forecast. The details of the various changes are set out in the report.

Mr Charles also highlighted the necessity to amend the budget to reflect the current structural changes from Faculties to Schools and the on-going discussions with the Lancashire Local Government Pension Scheme regarding the proposed significant increase to the University's contribution rate.

Resolved: That the Chief Finance Officer's report be noted.

UB1108. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Annual Report 2021-22

Professor Ireland joined the meeting.

Professor Ireland presented the University's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion ("EDI") Annual Report 2021-22. A copy of the report is set out in the Minute book.

Professor Ireland reported that the annual report was comprehensive and detailed and, hopefully, self-explanatory. However, the report had been amended since being presented to the recent Resources Committee to include a reference to the University Board in the chart showing the Governance and Operating Framework. Professor Ireland also reported that the former EDI Director, Pradeep Passi, had left the University to take up a position at another University and that UCLan had appointed an interim Head of EDI pending the appointment of a new Director. That process has now been concluded and a new Director has been appointed and would be joining the University shortly. This appointment would enable a "fresh pair of eyes" to look at the area and refresh the focus of the University on key areas of work to be taken forward.

Reserved Minute - Text Redacted

Mrs Norris commented that, as the Board Lead Member on EDI issues, she would discuss this matter with Professor Ireland. Mrs Norris also noted that the University now has a set of measures that can be monitored, make a difference and, hopefully, become embedded values. However, challenges remained, including how we can measure if the measures were having an impact on the ground.

Mr Tynan highlighted the fact that Training 2000 needed to be included in the section referring to UCLan campuses on page 7 of the annual report.

In response to a question from Mr J Baldwin, Professor Ireland felt that the UCLan community was “with us” but commented that the culture on the ground is not changing as quickly as we would like and that it remained a “work in progress”.

Resolved: That the University’s Equality, Diversity and Inclusion report 2021-22 now presented, be agreed.

UB1109. Degree Apprenticeships: The Current Position

Professor StJohn Crean joined the meeting for this item.

Professor StJohn Crean presented a report updating them on the current position in respect of the delivery by the University of Degree Apprenticeships programmes. A copy of the presentation slides is set out in the Minute book.

In introducing his presentation, Professor Crean explained that more detailed background documentation would be placed on the University Board portal for information. Professor Crean explained that it was important that Board Members were aware of the Degree Apprenticeship programme and of any important issues and how such issues were being and/or would be addressed. Professor Crean also summarised the important roles played by Ofsted and the Education & Skills Funding Agency (“ESFA”) in regulating the delivery and funding of Degree Apprenticeships.

With regard to potential inspections, Professor Crean underlined the importance of maintaining comprehensive and accurate data about the training provision and activities etc undertaken by learners. This was a more comprehensive data recording regime than is required for non-apprenticeship students and the University had sought to put in place a rigorous data collection and management regime in order to comply with these requirements and be able to evidence that fact.

Professor Crean also explained that it was important for Governing Body Members to also be aware of key issues relating to the delivery of Degree Apprenticeships. To date, updates have largely been provided to the Audit Committee, but Professor Crean and Mr Fisher explained that it was likely that the Board will be asked to nominate Lead Members or champions to provide input and non-executive oversight of Degree Apprenticeship issues.

Finally, Professor Crean briefly summarised the Degree Apprenticeship process including progression and end point assessments. The importance of “stretching” learners with the aim of helping them to get a better job was also highlighted.

The Board welcomed the report and several Members reported their previous participation in experience of school and training provider inspections and agreed that Governor involvement was important. This included engagement with learners. The role of the Students’ Union was also noted.

Resolved: That

- (i) the report and presentation be noted; and
- (ii) the Governance Committee consider how best to ensure Board level engagement with and oversight of Degree Apprenticeship provision and report back as soon as possible.

Professor Crean and Dr Ridwanah Gurjee left the meeting.

UB1110. Student Mental Health and Wellbeing 2021-22

Professor Ireland presented the Student Mental Health and Wellbeing report 2021-22. A copy of the report and presentation slides are set out in the Minute book.

Professor Ireland explained that the report and slides had been prepared in order to provide a comprehensive update on developments in this area over the 2021-22 Academic Year. However, the presentation also includes developments underway in the current academic year.

In presenting the slides, Professor Ireland reported that there were increasing concerns across the sector about student mental health and wellbeing issues. Hardship was also an increasing problem. In making his presentation, Professor Ireland drew particular attention to the following:-

- The excellent performance of UCLan in relevant league tables and student satisfaction with mental health support.
- The adoption of the Mental Health Charter by the University in September 2022.
- The developing internal and external structures and collaborative working to deliver an effective "Whole University" approach and close links with key external agencies and stakeholders.
- The increase in student referrals and engagement with relevant support services.
- The positive audit by the University's Internal Auditors which highlighted the substantial work in progress in meeting the OfS Regulatory Framework and providing "substantial assurance" to the University.

In response to questions from Board Members, Professor Ireland reported that previous waiting lists for support had reduced significantly. With regard to suicide (or potential suicide), deaths and "near-misses", Professor Ireland explained that the University has a "lessons learned" process which includes a review of coroners' findings. He also confirmed that the University had various best practice documents and that the OfS was moving to require more mandatory training.

Resolved: That Professor Ireland be thanked for his very helpful report and presentation.

Professor Ireland left the meeting.

UB1111. Committee Chair's Updates:

(i) Governance, Risk and Nominations Committee 22/02/23

The Chair of the Committee briefly summarised the issues discussed at the last meeting.

Mr Taylor reported that the Committee had received a report on OfS Regulatory Compliance which did not identify any significant issues.

The Vice-Chancellor presented an update of the University Risk Register following a review by the Vice-Chancellor's Group. The review included the potential impact of increased financial pressures on the University. The Committee also noted that an update on Degree Apprenticeships would be presented to the Board at today's meeting.

Finally, there had been a discussion on Board appointment/re-appointment issues which is also on the agenda for this meeting.

Resolved: That Mr Taylor be thanked for the update.

(ii) Reserved Minute - Text Redacted

UB1112. Update from Academic Board Meeting 08/03/23

Mrs Lloyd confirmed that she had attended the meeting of the Academic Board on 8th March. Mrs Lloyd confirmed that the University Board can be assured that the Academic Board was fulfilling their role. Mrs Lloyd found the data report presented by Mr Stanton to be particularly helpful.

Resolved: That Mrs Lloyd be thanked for her report.

UB1113. Board Terms of Office and Appointment Issues

The Chair reported on two matters considered by the Committee relating to the Board.

Firstly, Mr Taylor explained that Mrs Lloyd was approaching the end of her current term of office and the Committee is requesting the Board to re-appoint her for a final term of office expiring on 23rd March 2026. Mrs Lloyd had agreed to serve the final term should the Board so decide.

The second issue related to the Chair. Mr Taylor explained that his final term of office expires in the Autumn and the Committee had been considering the matter for some time., including during the recruitment process, but had failed to identify a suitable candidate.

In the circumstances and subject to the wishes of the Board, Dr Ion had agreed to take up the role as Chair for an initial period of 12 months from 1st September. Mr Fisher explained that he had held informal discussions with all Independent Governors and that there was strong and unanimous support for Dr Ion.

Mr Fisher also reported that, should the Board agree to the recommendations, the Governance, Risk and Nominations Committee would consider consequential implications for Committee membership etc and report back in due course.

Resolved: That:-

- (i) Mrs Lloyd be re-appointed as a member of the Board for a final term of office expiring on 23rd March 2026; and
- (ii) Dr Sue Ion be appointed as Chair of the University Board for an initial period of 12 months with effect from 1st September 2023.

Note - Mrs Lloyd and Dr Ion did not participate in the discussion or vote in respect of the issues relating to themselves.

UB1114. Any Other Business

Mr Odjegba briefly updated the Board on several Students Union issues.

Firstly, he explained that the annual election of Students Union Officers had now been held and that the newly elected officers would take up their roles on 1st July.

Mr Odjegba also reported that the Students Union's Annual Golden Roses Awards process for both Preston and Burnley was underway and that the winners would be announced in due course.

Finally, Mr Odjegba echoed the Vice-Chancellor's comments about the very positive impact of the recent sporting success of UCLan teams.

Resolved: That Mr Odjegba be thanked for his update.

UB1115. Date and time of Next Meeting

Resolved: That the next meeting of the University Board is to be held on 25th April 2023 at the Belsfield Hotel, Bowness-on-Windermere, Cumbria, LA23 3EL. Full details to be provided in due course.

Ian Fisher
Clerk to the Board