

University of Central Lancashire

Unreserved Minutes of the Board Meeting Held on 23rd September 2021 commencing at 10.00am

Present (via video-conference):

Jim Edney (Chair)

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| Fiona Armstrong | Lesley Lloyd |
| Graham Baldwin | Ruth Lowry |
| Zuleika Chikh | Anne McCarthy |
| Nicky Danino | Bill McQueen |
| Ridwanah Gurjee | Lorraine Norris |
| Sue Ion | |

Also in attendance (via video-conference):

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 - Students and Teaching) - UB969 only
Carolyn Johnson (Executive Officer to the Vice Chancellor)
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 (Head of Governance/Deputy Clerk to the Board)

UB957. Welcome and Apologies

The Chair welcomed all present to the meeting.

Apologies for absence had been received from Mr Hext and Mr Taylor. The Chair undertook to mention matters raised by Mr Hext (in e-mails) at appropriate points in the meeting.

UB958. Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interests other than those recorded under UB970 below.

UB959. Chair's Announcements

There were no Chair's announcements.

UB960. Reserved and Unreserved Minutes of the University Board Meeting held on 1st July 2021

Resolved: That the Reserved and Unreserved Minutes of the University Board Meeting held on 1st July 2021 were agreed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

UB961. Matters Arising from the University Board Meeting held on 1st July 2021

(i) UB942(ii) - Vice Chancellor's Update - League Tables

Professor Baldwin reported on the development of the Course Health Dashboard and the extent to which the emerging new resource is already being used in such exercises as the current review of courses which require remedial attention.

UB962. Vice-Chancellor's Update

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) Reserved Minute - Text Redacted

(ii) Industrial Relations

The UCU's response to the recent 1.5% pay award has been to ballot for industrial action, this being the latest indicator of the union's apparent determination to bring about some form of action, possibly before the end of the calendar year.

Reserved Minute - Text Redacted

Mr Lee outlined the ballot and potential industrial action timeline. With the ongoing ballot due to close on 4th November 2021, and with the requirement to serve two weeks notice before commencement of action, disruption towards the end of the calendar year or early in 2022 is a possibility.

(iii) Comprehensive Spending Review

The much-delayed 3-Year review is to be announced by the Chancellor of the Exchequer on 27th October 2021. It is expected that recommendations from the Augar Review (into post-18 education) will finally be taken into account. A 'fees freeze' (as opposed to a fees cut) is one rumoured outcome. This will inevitably add to the financial pressure under which institutions are already having to operate. It is also possible that some form of student intake control is being contemplated.

Professor Baldwin reminded the Board about recent new ministerial appointments. Since any form of funding reduction or capping of student intake will inevitably impair the University's ability to meet the needs of students and communities served, there will be much lobbying and engagement. He provided details of forthcoming events at which he will personally aim to influence the course of events, including his presentation with Michelle Donelan MP (Minister of State for Universities) at the Conservative Party Conference.

(iv) *Vice Chancellor's Group Structure*

Transition to the revised VCG structure (as notified to Board Members under separate correspondence) is ongoing.

(v) *The Estate*

The new Student Centre is now open and in use and the Centre will provide an impressive venue for the Vice Chancellor's Dinner event.

An independent review of the University's estate is to be commissioned with a view to allowing comparisons with other institutions but also to check on health and safety standards and other general considerations.

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

(vii) *Times Higher Education (THE) Awards 2021*

The three reported UCLan shortlistings (two more than in 2020) are most encouraging in this particularly competitive year, with around 600 submissions received at the THE.

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

Finally, Professor Baldwin drew attention to the items in the 'UCLan News Highlights' section of his report.

Ms Chikh commented on the report's references to pandemic-related issues relating to the experiences of international students. Professor Baldwin confirmed that the University continued to monitor developments and occurrences closely, responding wherever possible.

Professor Baldwin and Mrs Connor also reassured the Board that the later arrival at campus of many students was also catered for with appropriate welcome arrangements and information and guidance facilities. Mrs Connor outlined the arrangements for the remote provision of advance/pre-travel guidance and support.

Professor Baldwin also confirmed that the Students Union input into the NSS Working Group's deliberations would be extremely helpful.

Board members concurred with the Chair's assessment that Professor Baldwin's comprehensive and clear update provided an appropriate level of information on all key matters. The Chair thanked Professor Baldwin for his report.

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

UB963. University Strategic Plan 2021-2028

Professor Baldwin presented his report on the new Strategic Plan, including a copy of the latest draft of the document. Copies of the report and the draft document are set out in the Minute Book.

Professor Baldwin drew attention to the updates in the draft which reflected Board member contributions at the Strategic Planning event on 30th July 2021. Regarding the sub-strategies and enabling strategies which will support the overarching document, the

'Student Opportunity and Success' sub-strategy as appended to the draft provided an example of such documents.

Mrs Connor confirmed that, with nearly all the supporting documents now completed, a formal launch of the new Strategic Plan could, once approved by the Board, proceed at the end of October or early November. The document will be available in both hard and digital formats. Thereafter, arrangements for monitoring and measuring performance against the new Plan will be applied.

Ms Chikh considered that the new document was very impressive. In response to her question about the 'research' interface with teaching, Professor Baldwin described how an appropriate emphasis and incorporation of research – and specifically by UCLan researchers – within the curriculum will be pursued.

In noting Ms Chikh's suggestion regarding a metric relating to the proportion of staff from minority ethnic backgrounds, Professor Baldwin advised that this will be taken into account, although a limit on the number of top-level KPIs is desirable. Similarly, Mr Hext's e-mail comments about social mobility measuring will be considered, although this may not be something which UCLan alone could readily deliver.

Professor Baldwin explained that the KPIs would be systematically review and adapted during the course of the seven years of what is expected to be a dynamic new Plan.

Ms Chikh considered that the creation of employment advisory panels in each School represented a positive move towards consistency in performance. The focus on student retention throughout the Plan is also welcomed. Professor Baldwin advised that the presentation by Professor A Ireland later in the agenda (UB969 below) would offer more detail on the University's endeavours. In this context, he drew attention to the new Transition to Higher Education programmes planned for delivery under the 2021-22 Action Plan.

Mrs Lloyd suggested that some of the images in the draft might be checked so as to ensure that they reflect UCLan's high technology and sustainability aspirations. The document might also include images/photographs of some of the new facilities.

Professor Baldwin agreed with Mrs Lloyd that, since versions of the document would reach the public domain, care must be taken to preserve commercial sensitivity boundaries.

Mr Lee confirmed that Mrs Norris's expectations around the inclusion of EDI considerations and measures would be met via the sub-strategies.

In conclusion, all concurred with the Chair's view, that the draft represented a very impressive and suitably ambitious plan to take the University forward. It was agreed that, subject to any further changes to format in line with the discussion above, that the draft Plan should now be adopted.

Resolved: That, subject to further consideration of and, if appropriate, changes to the pictorial content of the draft document, the Strategic Plan 2021-2028 be approved.

UB964. Reserved Minute - Text Redacted

UB965. Reserved Minute - Text Redacted

UB966. Academic Board Annual Assurance Report

Dr Livesey presented the Annual Assurance Report. A copy of the report is set out in the Minute Book.

Dr Livesey suggested that the comprehensive Report, which outlined all key decisions and mapped the University's performance against regulatory requirements, should provide the Board with assurance that the Academic Board is fulfilling its role and that OfS conditions of registration are being met.

Dr Livesey reminded the Board that, for added assurance, the meetings of the Academic Board are attended by the Board's own representatives (Dr S Ion and Mrs L Lloyd).

Mrs Lloyd confirmed that the Academic Board meetings proceed efficiently and effectively. Dr Ion concurred with Mrs Lloyd's confirmation, adding that the Academic Board meetings documentation is also of a high quality.

The Chair thanked Dr Livesey for her report and also Dr Ion and Mrs Lloyd for their continued assistance.

In noting that this would be the final occasion on which Dr Livesey would attend the University Board before her retirement at the end of October 2021, the Chair thanked her on behalf of the Board for her immense contribution to the management of the institution and also for the support which she had provided to the Board.

Dr Livesey wished the Board and the University community well for the future.

Resolved: That the University Board be assured that Academic Board is effectively fulfilling its responsibilities in accordance with its Terms of Reference.

UB967. Cyber Attack (March 2021) Report

Professor Baldwin presented the report which provided full details of the incident in March 2021 and the management of the matter. A copy of the report is set out in the Minute Book.

Professor Baldwin reminded the Board that reports had already been presented to the Board and to the Resources Committee and the Audit Committee since the occurrence in March 2021. He commented on the key points in the report now presented.

The Chair confirmed that the incident had, indeed, already been reviewed and University Management's response had been monitored and affirmed. The Board and the Committees had noted the various assurances and safeguards which are in place, but it will remain essential for all possible defences against such attacks to be continually monitored and upgraded.

Resolved: That the Cyber Attack (March 2021) report be noted.

UB968. Ethnicity Pay Gap Reporting

Mr Lee provided a verbal update which included confirmation that mandatory reporting on ethnicity pay gaps had still not been introduced. He advised that, particularly outside the HE sector, ethnicity pay gap reporting was becoming commonplace, with reports indicating

significant gaps in some quarters. At UCLan, work and action planning in anticipation of the introduction of mandatory is proceeding.

Mr Lee advised that the first reports on the position at UCLan were expected to be available for the next meeting of the Board.

Resolved: That the report on Ethnicity Pay Gap be noted.

UB969. Student Health and Wellbeing - Annual Report

Professor Ireland gave a presentation which updated the Board on the networks and partnerships currently in operation, on developments in 2020-21, on emerging issues and trends and on the University's responses. A copy of the presentation is set out in the Minute Book.

Professor Ireland's presentation included the following:

- *Working Collaboratively*

Internal collaboration is the only effective way of ensuring the necessary integration of an holistic service. External collaboration extends to a wide range of agencies and partners.

- *Categories of Support*

Delivery of the vast range of support categories entails high-quality training of frontline staff

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

- *Emerging Trends and Issues*

These included

- continuous media scrutiny in relation to suicide, mental health, inclusion and sexual violence
- increasing numbers of students with complex Autism spectrum Disorder
- OfS expectations around the management of sexual violence, domestic abuse and harassment
- Requirements for reasonable adjustments (rather than Disabled Student Allowance reliance)
- Inclusive learning environments expectations
- Increases in complexity (students entering HE with significant mental health, wellbeing and disability-related challenges and support needs)
- Increasing out of hours support demand

- *UCLan's Response*

This includes

- New steering group – Sexual Violence, Domestic Abuse and Harassment (inaugural meeting in September 2021)
- Preparation for Student Minds University Mental Health Charter accreditation
- Specialist training in critical and emerging support areas
- Review of all student-facing policies
- Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system for students to commence development
- Including Learning Environment launch (September 2021)

- Opening of new Student Centre and its one-stop wrap-around support offer
- On call management service (in Student Services) enhancement
- Extended use of Student Wellbeing Ambassadors

Finally, Professor Ireland commented on the UCLan response to suicide prevention including staff training on spotting potential suicide signs and signals.

The Board then discussed Professor Ireland's presentation.

Reserved Minute - Text Redacted

In response to Ms Chikh's question about provisions for students with autism, Professor Ireland advised on the access and participation work and provisions including the identification of persons to meet and welcome such students and to be the point of contact and support for both internal and external needs.

The Chair thanked Professor Ireland for his most informative report on what is recognised as an area of immense importance. It was noted that the VCG receives periodic reports on student health and wellbeing and that the availability of key information will be enhanced once dashboard information becomes available. Professor Baldwin confirmed that, in the event that any matter of particular interest or concern should arise, such would be covered in reports to the Board. Otherwise, an annual report will again be produced for the Board. Professor Baldwin also confirmed that the KPIs linked to the new Strategic Plan will also cover student health and wellbeing.

UB970. Pensions Update

Interests were declared in respect of this item as follows:

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

Mr Lee provided a verbal update on the new Defined Contribution pension scheme. Since 1st August 2021, job advertisements had referred to the new scheme and the first new member/employee had joined the scheme in September 2021. Mr Lee confirmed that, in the course of a full year, it is estimated that 80-100 new members will join the scheme.

In commenting on lessons learned, the importance of effective communications with members had been borne out. However, excellent services from internal teams (including Legal and Finance) had been important contributions to the successful development of the new scheme.

In response to the Chair's question about the reaction of employees, Mr Lee advised that the performance of the appointed provider (Royal London) was considered by employees to be good and especially the use of intelligible language in all communications.

In thanking Mr Lee for his report, the Chair requested that updating reports, including views and reactions of the trade unions, be presented from time to time.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

UB971. Annual Report of the Clerk to the Board

Mr Fisher presented the Annual Report of the Clerk to the Board. A copy of the report is set out in the Minute Book.

Mr Fisher confirmed that the Meetings Schedule (Board and Committees) for 2021-22 had been distributed and that the equivalent document for 2022-23 was already under production and would follow in due course.

Board Members examined the Annual report and the supporting appendices and agreed that there were no issues to be addressed.

Mr Fisher also advised that, for data security reasons, e-mail communications with Board Members will now be primarily via the UCLan e-mail address made available to each Board Member. Increased use will also be made of the Board's Governance Portal facility for the distribution of documentation. E-mail alerts (to personal e-mail addresses) will continue to be sent. It was also agreed that the guidance on accessing and using the Governance Portal (including the log-in process) would be re-circulated.

The Chair asked all Board members to co-operate with Mr Fisher's team in the annual updating of the Board's Register of Interests.

Resolved: That the Clerk to the Board's Annual Report and its attachments be noted.

UB972. Committee Chairs' Update

Resources Committee

Mr Edney (Chair of Resources Committee) reported on the two matters - Tuition Fees Policy and Fees for 2022-23 and Contracts for Over £1million value - covered at the special meeting of the Resources Committee on 28th August 2021.

It was agreed that the approved Tuition Fees Policy would be distributed to all Board Members.

Urgent Business Committee

Mr Edney confirmed that the Tuition Fees Policy and fees for 2022-23 matter discussion at the special Resources Committee meeting on 28th August 2021 had been confirmed on behalf of the University Board by the Urgent Business Committee at a meeting immediately following the Resources Committee meeting.

Mr Fisher explained the context wherein a meeting of the Urgent Business Committee had been called for on this occasion.

Resolved: That the Chairs' Updates be noted.

UB973. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

UB974. Date and Time of Next Meeting

It was noted that the next meeting will be at 2.00pm on Thursday, 25th November 2021 at the Belsfield Hotel, Bowness-on-Windermere. It was noted that, in order to accommodate any Board members who may have concerns about 'in person' meetings at that point, alternative participation arrangements will have to be explored. The position will be kept under review.

Resolved: That the next meeting be at 2.00pm on Thursday, 25th November 2021.

I M Fisher
Clerk to the Board