

# MINUTES

## BOARD OF GOVERNORS

<b>Date:</b>	Tuesday 09 April 2019	<b>Time:</b>	1500 (refreshments from 1445)
<b>Location:</b>	Boardroom, University House, Leek Road Campus		

### Notes:

1. Items marked with an asterisk (starred items) were for information only or regarded as noncontentious.
2. Items classified as Confidential, and their subsequent minutes (highlighted here in blue), will be redacted before publication of the agenda and minutes on the University's public website.

<b>Members</b>		
Professor Liz Barnes	Vice Chancellor	P
Richard Cotterell	External Member	A
Tash Crump	Student Representative (President, Students' Union)	A
David Gage (Chair)	External Member	P
Kevin Gould	External Member	P
Glenn Earlam	External Member	P
John Henderson (Deputy Chair)	External Member	A
Mike Herbert	External Member	P
Cathryn Hickey	External Member	P
Doug Rouxel	Academic Staff Representative	P
Sarah Tudor	Professional Support Staff Representative	P
Jonathan Vardon	External Member	P
Scott William-Smith	Student Representative (Vice President, Students' Union)	A
Sara Williams	External Member	P
<b>In attendance</b>		
Ian Blachford	Chief Operating Officer and Clerk to the Board of Governors	IA
Alan Charters	Project Director, Catalyst Build ( <i>for minute 2532.i only</i> )	IA
Dr Simone Clarke	Director of Strategic Planning ( <i>for External Landscape presentation only</i> )	IA
Professor Ieuan Ellis	Pro Vice Chancellor – Partnerships & Region	IA
Professor Martin Jones	Deputy Vice Chancellor	IA
Sue Reece	Pro Vice Chancellor – Student Experience	IA
Lauren Rooke	Assistant Clerk to the Board of Governors (minutes)	IA
Lord Stafford	Chancellor	IA
Pascale Vermassen	Acting Director of Finance	IA

P = Present; T = via telephone; A = Apologies; IA = In Attendance

## Know Your Business

A presentation on Beacon the University bot and how AI and learner analytics can aid the hyper-personalisation of our services was received from Andrew Proctor, Director of Digital Services.

Members commented as follows:

- Martin Jones enquired about the staffing resources allocated to the bot's development and Andrew Proctor clarified that there were two dedicated members of staff working on this with the ability to outsource if needed.
- Martin Jones asked how the development and implementation of Beacon linked in to the use of data analytics across the institution. Andrew Proctor confirmed that Beacon was a core building block in the development of the University's strategy around data analytics.
- Glenn Earlam asked whether it was yet possible for Beacon to be used to synchronise student timetables with their personal calendars and Andrew Proctor clarified that this kind of functionality, which would help increase uptake further, was planned.

## The Current External Landscape and the Implications for Staffordshire University

A session was delivered by the Vice Chancellor on the above topic. The following main areas were covered:

- Risks on the horizon ("the perfect storm")
- Agreed financial outcomes of the Strategic Financial Plan
- Income growth (student numbers)
- Impact of potential reduced fees and tariff restrictions (Augar Review)
- Roadmap vs growth model
- Role and responsibilities of the Board of Governors, including responsibilities under HERA 2017 and as charity trustees

1 MEETING MANAGEMENT	
2524	<b>Apologies for Absence</b> were received from Richard Cotterell, Tash Crump, John Henderson and Scott William-Smith.
2525	<b>Declarations of Interest: Mike Herbert</b> noted that he had been appointed Governor of St Margaret's CofE Junior School, Wolstanton.
2526	<b>The Minutes of the last meeting of the Board of Governors</b> , 21 November 2018 BG/112/01, were signed as a true and accurate record.
2527	<b>Matters arising:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>i) <b>Minute 2498 – University Coat of Arms</b> – an update was noted from the Pro Vice Chancellor – Student Experience BG/112/02.</li><li>ii) <b>Minute 2505 – Strategic Developments and Organisational Performance (re Police Apprenticeships Contract)</b> – a verbal update was noted from the Pro Vice Chancellor – Partnerships &amp; Region, who clarified that on the current timeline, a delivery start date of end-June was likely.</li><li>iii) <b>Minute 169 (Sustainability &amp; Resources Cttee) – Partnerships Update</b> – an update on the current financial position with partnerships was received from the Pro Vice Chancellor – Partnerships &amp; Region, accompanied by paper BG/112/20 (sent separately to the main pack).  Members commented as follows:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• David Gage raised a query regarding the termination of contracts and Ieuan Ellis clarified that these decisions were based not only on financials but on quality and standards, and potential future progress.</li><li>• Sara Williams asked whether an overview of the future partnerships strategy should now be prepared for Governors and Liz Barnes proposed that a paper on this be brought to Strategy and Performance Committee prior to referral to Board.</li></ul></li><li>iv) <b>Update on Membership</b> – noted from the Clerk, who informed the Board that Richard Cotterell would stand down as a Governor on 31 July 2019. David Gage underlined the importance of Governor commitment to attendance.</li></ul>
2 STRATEGIC OVERVIEW	
2528	The Board received and discussed a report on <b>Strategic Developments and Organisational Performance</b> BG/112/03 from the Vice Chancellor. The following main areas were covered: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• External environment:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Degree classifications (including UKSCQA Review and Consultation and OfS analysis)</li><li>○ OfS report of data analysis of unconditional offer-making</li><li>○ Augar Review</li></ul></li></ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ New Universities Minister</li> <li>○ REF 2021</li> <li>○ International Education Strategy</li> <li>○ Think Modern Campaign</li> <li>○ Widening Access and Participation</li> <li>○ Brexit</li> <li>○ Sector engagement on student experience</li> <li>● Internal developments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Sexual Violence Awareness Week</li> <li>○ Senior staff appointments</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>There were no comments from members.</p>
2529	<p>The Board received the formal minutes and supporting notes from the <b>Strategic Weekend 08-09 Feb 2019</b> BG/112/04 and 04a.</p> <p>The minutes of the Strategic Weekend 08-09 Feb 2019 BG/112/04 were signed as a true and accurate record.</p>
<b>3 SUB-COMMITTEE BRIEFING SHEETS AND REFERRED ITEMS</b>	
2530	<p>The briefing sheets for <b>Audit and Risk Committee</b>, 15 January 2019 BG/112/05 and 12 March 2019 BG/112/06 were received.</p> <p><b>For approval</b></p> <p>i. <b>Minute 1616 - Annual Review of Risk Appetites</b> BG/112/07</p> <p>The Chief Operating Officer noted that the Risk Appetites were now presented to the Board for formal approval following approval by SLT on 7 Feb 2019, when one risk appetite had been amended (Partnerships).</p> <p>The Risk Appetites were approved.</p> <p>ii. <b>Minute 1617 – Risk Management Framework Update (proposed new University-level Risks)</b> BG/112/08</p> <p>The Chief Operating Officer noted that the report provided an overview of the identification and approval process for the revised University-level risks so far, and that these were now presented to the Board for formal approval.</p> <p>Members commented as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Liz Barnes highlighted that her earlier presentation reflected these new risks, and Sara Williams noted that the Business Risk Manager had provided assurance that these new risks (and the responsibility for them) were now being well-embedded throughout the institution with the relevant departments.</li> <li>● David Gage commended the work of the Audit and Risk Committee and Sara Williams underlined the recent work done on the BAME student experience, highlighted in the recent BAME Student Journey Internal Audit report presented by RSM (rated reasonable assurance).</li> </ul> <p>The new University-level Risks contained within the Risk Management Framework Update were approved.</p>
2531	<p>The briefing sheets for <b>Strategy and Performance Committee</b>, 26 February 2019 BG/112/09 were received.</p> <p><b>For information</b></p> <p>i. <b>Minute 71 – Strategy to 2030</b> (<i>via item 2.1</i>)</p> <p>ii. <b>Minute 73 – Student Recruitment End-of-Cycle Report 2017-18</b> (<i>via item 5.2</i>)</p> <p>iii. <b>Minute 74 – Student Retention Report</b> BG/112/10</p> <p>Members commented as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Liz Barnes highlighted the University’s excellent ranking for teaching in the Times and Sunday Times Good University Guide. This contrasted with the University’s much lower ranking for retention, but the Board was reminded that the various measures in place around this metric, including the recent rewriting of the regulations, were contributing to an overall improvement. (Liz Barnes also reminded the Board that Strategy and Performance Committee received regular updates on KPI attainment, including around retention,)</li> <li>● Sara Williams asked about retention best practice and Sue Reece confirmed that this was being shared across the University. Sara Williams proposed that a retention report be a standing item for the Board for the foreseeable future - this was agreed, and would be considered through Strategy and Performance Committee.</li> </ul> <p>The Student Retention Report was noted.</p>

2532

The briefing sheets for **Sustainability and Resources Committee**, 19 March 2019 BG/112/11 were received.

**For approval**

i. **Minute 186 – Catalyst Update - Mezzanine Inclusion** BG/112/12

The paper was introduced by the Project Director – Catalyst Build, who noted that the proposal had been drafted following visits by the Project team and University stakeholders to other similar buildings, after it had become clear that it would be good practice to maximise space (and therefore improve the potential for employer and apprenticeships engagement) with the inclusion of a mezzanine level in key areas. The proposal had been approved by Sustainability and Resources Committee at its meeting on 19 March 2019 and formal approval was now sought from the Board.

Members commented as follows:

- Cathryn Hickey asked how employer and apprenticeships engagement had been catered for in the original plans, prior to the mezzanine proposal. Alan Charters clarified that originally this had been allowed for over the ground and first floors, but that the new plans allowed for a more professional approach to this space. The freed-up space would provide larger areas for teaching and learning spaces. Liz Barnes underlined that the approach to the Catalyst building was to remain as flexible as possible whilst still enabling effective student and employer engagement.

The proposal for the Catalyst building mezzanine inclusion was approved.

**For information**

ii. **Minute 187 – London Provision Update (Digital Institute London)** BG/112/13

The Chief Operating Officer and Pro Vice Chancellor – Student Experience gave a brief verbal update of progress since the drafting of the paper.

Members commented as follows:

- Jonathan Vardon asked about a potential site visit for Governors. Ian Blachford clarified that on the current timeline, fit-out was likely to be completed by late August, and that a visit could therefore be scheduled as part of the launch event.
- Cathryn Hickey asked about the initial student reaction at local London recruitment events. Sue Reece confirmed that students so far had been very interested in the course itself and had also commended the location and ease of access.

The update on the Digital Institute London was noted.

iii. **Minute 192 - Student Numbers: In-Year Update** BG/112/14

Members commented as follows:

- Jonathan Vardon noted the importance of course portfolio, and the marketing of individual courses to enable them to stand out in the market. Sue Reece confirmed that significant work was currently underway around portfolio review, and that her team were already looking out for the next Esports, in terms of popularity and performance.
- David Gage highlighted how much work had been done throughout the institution to improve applicant numbers and retention.
- Jonathan Vardon asked about timelines and Sue Reece confirmed that the course roadmap would be brought to the June Board meeting.
- Glenn Earlam asked about the rethinking of specific course titles and “contemporising” these to enable potential applicants to clearly see possible routes. Doug Rouxel underlined that search engine optimisation was a crucial element. Sue Reece clarified that a change of staffing within Marketing had contributed to improvements, and that the considerable work had taken place to overhaul the University’s student-facing website.
- Kevin Gould underlined the importance of not compromising on quality and standards when it came to portfolio review and Sue Reece agreed with this.
- Jonathan Vardon noted his belief that acting quickly was the most important element of portfolio review.
- Doug Rouxel noted that he had recently acted as an external panel member for Morley College, London, and had been impressed with their approach to portfolio management.

The Student Numbers: In-Year Update was noted.

iv. **Minute 195 - Pensions Update** BG/112/15

	<p>The Chief Operating Officer reminded Governors that the University had responded to the Government consultation on the planned changes to the costs of the TPS, in conjunction with the MillionPlus working group and that it was not expected that the Government would move from its current position.</p> <p>The Pensions Update was noted.</p> <p><i>Clerk's note: The DfE confirmed on 10 Apr 2019 that HEIs would not receive any additional funding to meet increased TPS costs for 2019-20, and this was communicated to the Board of Governors by email the same day.</i></p>
<b>4 FOR DISCUSSION AND/OR APPROVAL (marked below accordingly)</b>	
	<b>NONE</b>
<b>5 FOR INFORMATION</b>	
2533	<p>The Board received and noted the <b>Students' Union Report</b> BG/112/16, which covered the following main areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student Voice</li> <li>• The Union: Moving Forward and Long-Term Projects</li> <li>• Student Charter Review</li> <li>• Leadership Race</li> <li>• Green Week</li> <li>• Proud to be Staffs Awards</li> </ul> <p>Members commented as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sue Reece noted that the Students' Union had previously been asked to provide more context to the figures used in their reports.</li> <li>• Sarah Tudor agreed that a broader and more representative picture of student voice successes and issues would aid the Board, and Jonathan Vardon echoed this, asking how the Board could be assured that it was well-informed on what was important to students. Sue Reece highlighted that other sources of information, such as University-led student surveys and information gathered through Beacon the bot, were available, and that analysis of this data often led to good relationship-building with networks that felt marginalised by the SU.</li> <li>• Lord Stafford noted that there was often a misconception amongst students that governing body members were remunerated, and that correcting this assumption often led to an improvement in the relationship between an institution and its Union.</li> <li>• Liz Barnes proposed that more guidance be given to the Students' Union on the scope, format and context of their reporting to Board, and Sara Williams suggested that the SU reps be offered access to the training courses on report-writing offered by the Chamber of Commerce.</li> <li>• Liz Barnes proposed that the item phrased along the lines of "What have we done for students today/How the Board has made a difference" be added to the end of each Board and committee meeting, and that the SU report be brought to the next meeting of SLT so that specific issues could be discussed, with the Students' Union invited to attend.</li> </ul>
2534	<p>The Board received and noted an <b>Executive Summary of the Student Recruitment End-of-Cycle Report 2017-18</b> BG/112/17, introduced by the Pro Vice Chancellor – Student Experience, who clarified that the Executive Summary gave an overview of applications, acceptances and enrolments for 2017-18, including a sections on "lessons learnt", and that the full report (which had been discussed by Strategy and Performance Committee) was available on SharePoint.</p>
2535	<p>The Board received and noted a report on <b>Financial KPIs – KPMG HE benchmarking</b> BG/112/18, introduced by the Acting Director of Finance, who gave an overview of the report (and clarified why the University appeared to be at a low ranking in terms of negative surplus), noting that this kind of benchmarking data was essentially becoming less and less useable, partially because it was difficult to know what other HEIs were facing in terms of Exceptional Items..</p> <p>Members commented as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Liz Barnes clarified that at a recent conference she had attended, the organisers had rated Staffordshire University as financially sustainable across the range of metrics.</li> <li>• Martin Jones underlined that some Russell Group institutions had borrowed heavily against growth that was very unlikely to now happen, leaving them with significant financial sustainability challenges.</li> <li>• Discussion continued regarding the current climate for UK HEIs with regard to financial sustainability and diversification of the traditional HE model.</li> </ul>
2536	<p>The Board noted the <b>*Draft Academic Board minutes (unconfirmed), 27 Feb 2019*</b> BG/112/19.</p>
<b>6 ADDITIONAL MATTERS</b>	
2537	<b>Additional matters:</b>

	a) Sara Williams asked about the strategy regarding local recruitment (schools and colleges) development and it was proposed that this be the subject of a future Know Your Business session.
2538	<b>Next meeting:</b> Tuesday 25 June 2019 (Boardroom, University House)