

MINUTES

BOARD OF GOVERNORS, BG-137

Date: Wednesday 25 June 2025

Time: 14:30

Location: CA105/6, Catalyst, Leek Rd

Know Your Business – Marketing, Student Recruitment and Admissions Recovery Plan – Ian Blachford, Chief Operating Officer (item BG/137/12)

The presentation was shared on the Marketing, Student Recruitment and Admissions Recovery Plan and an assessment of the current opportunities that could be capitalised upon to inform the next recruitment cycle for domestic and international, undergraduate and postgraduate student recruitment.

Members commented as follows:

- Juliet Oosthuysen welcomed the presentation and reflected upon the current position and the immediate developments. She reflected that this was a position of understanding the current position, identifying opportunities to rethink and then take action. She noted that the GANT charts reflected this, although this did not reflect a typical customer journey. In response, Ian Blachford highlighted that with each of the four income streams, the customer journey was being considered at each stage and holistically, to ensure that the messages and actions built in a logical format to improve the impact of conversion through the recruitment funnel. He did note, however, that time was challenging due to the need to impact the next recruitment cycle.
- Juliet Oosthuysen reflected that the following recruitment cycle will be more informed through better data capture and analysis in this cycle, as decisions implemented, could be evaluated in terms of impact.
- Baljinder Kuller stated that the University needed to have a senior role focused on the income development of the University and that it was not appropriate for this role to be undertaken by the Chief Operating Officer, as part of his overall portfolio. It was accepted in discussion that the University did need a specific focus to develop further the income of the University, although, at this point in time, the University needed to focus upon stabilising the income of the university and regaining some lost ground ideally, against the clock for the next cycle. In that sense, it was reflected that the immediate task was a turnaround in the very short term,
- Precious Ogbein asked if the Discovery Days had gone live yet and challenged the appropriateness of the title. Ian Blachford explained that they had not gone live yet and would be a feature of the Autumn campaign – of which planning was underway. The final use of the name Discovery Day had not been confirmed. She also asked about the changes being made to the international deposit. Ian Blachford explained that the deposit would remain at the previous level but now staggered with a smaller payment pre CAS and a larger payment post CAS.
- Martin Pugh stated that his summary for the international approach was 'fewer, bigger, better', while for the domestic market the focus was on marginal gains. He reflected that this approach to the domestic market seemed sensible in the short term, given our knowledge of recent performance, but may not be enough to drive a sustained turnaround in performance.

Members		
Gemma Brierley	External Member	P
Jonathan Chapman	External Member	P
Mohit Dhingra	External Member <i>from 14:45</i>	P (L)
Kevin Gould	External Member	P
Chris Headland	Staff Governor (academic staff)	P
Professor Martin Jones	Vice Chancellor	P
Baljinder Kuller	External Member	P
Joseph Knight	Student Governor (Vice President of Student Union)	P

Kim Newell Chebator	External Member	P
Precious Ogbein	Student Governor (President of Student Union)	P
Martin Pugh	External Member	P
Josie Morris	External Member <i>from 15:00</i>	(T)L
Jo Nixon	Staff Governor (professional services)	P
Juliet Oosthuysen	External Member	P
In attendance		
Ian Blachford	Chief Operating Officer and Clerk to the Board of Governors	IA
Sally McGill	Chief Financial Officer	IA
Professor Raheel Nawaz	Pro Vice Chancellor – Education & Research	IA

P = Present; A = Apologies; Ab = Absent; L = Late; IA = In Attendance; T = via Teams

1 MEETING MANAGEMENT	
3001	There were no apologies for absence received.
3002	There were no new Declarations of Interest
3003	The Minutes of Board of Governors Meeting , 25 March 2025, [BG 136], BG/137/01 were confirmed as a true and accurate record.
3004	<p>Matters arising:</p> <p>Minute 2069 – Fraud Prevention Policies – these were now available on the university website.</p> <p>Minute 2070 – Public Interest Disclosure Policy – these were now available on the university website.</p> <p>Minute 2073 – External Auditors Contract – the extension of the additional two years, approved at the last Board meeting, had now been confirmed.</p> <p>Minute 2996 – Update on Board Vacancies – this appeared elsewhere on agenda.</p> <p>To Note: Precious Ogbein has been re-elected as President of the Student Union and would be joined by Leah Thompson for the academic year 2025-2026. Both were welcomed to the meeting. It was Joseph Knight's last meeting as a Student Union elected officer and member of the Board of Governors. In addition, it was the last meeting for Kevin Gould, independent governor, and Martin Pugh expressed gratitude for his valued contribution since his appointment in 2017. Finally, Jo Nixon, newly appointed governor drawn from the professional staff body, was welcomed to the meeting.</p> <p>The matters arising were noted.</p>
2 STRATEGIC OVERVIEW	
3005	<p>The Strategic Developments and Organisational Performance Report BG/137/02 was introduced for discussion by Martin Jones, Vice Chancellor and Chief Executive.</p> <p>The regular report provides the Board of Governors with details of developments since the Board's last meeting in March 2025 in the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HE external policy landscape <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Spending Review ○ OfS annual assessment of the HE sector's financial sustainability ○ OfS Guidance Letter from the Education Secretary ○ Immigration White Paper ○ The Universities UK (UUK) transformation and efficiency taskforce report ○ Franchise provision in the news ○ OfS consultation on two new initial conditions of registration ○ OfS fine of the University of Sussex ○ Defunding of level 7-degree apprenticeships ○ Skills England • University performance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Complete University Guide 2026 ○ Woodlands Day Nursery and Forest School Awards ○ Student Village Award

- Nomination for AGCAS Academic Employability Awards 2025
- WhatUni Student Choice Awards (WUSCAs) 2025 for Career Prospects
- University business and events
 - Summer Awards Ceremonies
 - GradEX
 - Third TEDx event
 - Civic Engagement activities
 - Peter Coates MSc Entrepreneurship
- Staffing
 - Target Operating Plan (TOM) Transition

Members and attendees commented as follows:



There were no further comments and the report was noted.

3005 The **Potential Impact of DfE Changes to the Franchise Provision (DISCUSSION)** BG/137/03 paper was introduced for discussion by Professor Raheel Nawaz, Vice Chancellor. Education and Research.

The paper outlines the potential risks and likely impact of the Department for Education proposal to mandate UK franchise partners with over 300 students to directly register with the Office for Students (OfS), affecting the University's two largest UK private partners: CECOS and Wilkes. The proposed changes to the regulation will come into force from April 2026 onwards, with the first decisions in September 2027 for the 2028-29 academic year. Providers must submit for OfS registration by 1st May 2026; however, since CECOS had applied for registration before the proposed changes were announced, their application is likely to be considered sometime after August 2025. The proposal would have a significant impact upon the University. It would potentially:

- Alter the basis of the partnership arrangements
- Affect the university's income (approx. £0.8 million decrease to OfS income, impact on cash flow, alter bad debt risk and potentially require re-negotiation of the University partnership charge)
- Impact reputationally (including league table positioning, Student Outcome (B3) Metrics, NSS, Graduate Outcomes and APP)
- Have implications for operational management of the partnerships.

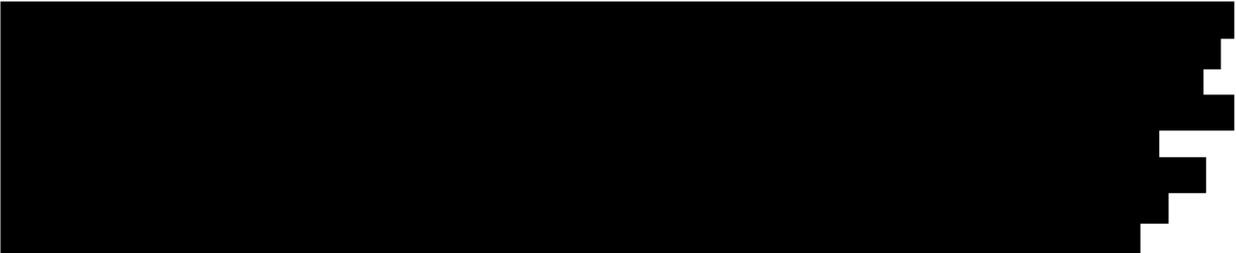
Members and attendees commented as follows:

- It was highlighted that this was a useful paper to understand the issues and it was reinforced that it was important to ensure that these important relationships were strategically managed. It was agreed that the Board will continue to be kept informed of future progress and developments.
- Kevin Gould asked if CECOS also partnered with other institutions. Raheel Nawaz confirmed that CECOS also had a relationship with Birmingham Newman University as a major HE partner.
- Jonathan Chapman asked about how these relationships were operationally managed to ensure that they were robust, given that this was an important area of consideration by the Audit and Risk Committee. Raheel Nawaz confirmed that partnerships were within his portfolio as the executive lead and were managed operational by the Head of Collaborative Academic Partnerships who reported into him directly. It was noted also that CECOS would again be audited as part of the internal audit plan for the 2025-2026 academic year, which was presented elsewhere on the agenda.

There were no further comments and the report was noted.

3 SUB-COMMITTEE BRIEFING SHEETS AND REFERRED ITEMS

3006 **BRIEFING SHEET – Nominations & Governance Committee, 6 May 2025, [N64] BG/137/04**

	<p>Approval</p> <p>a) Minute 738 - Terms of Office Renewal Schedule [NG/64/05], BG/137/05 – the schedule was approved.</p> <p>b) Minute 739 - Governor Appointment Update (Independent Governors) [NG/64/06], BG/137/06 – the Board approved the update and confirmed the appointment of the two new Independent Governors and a Coopted Member. The Clerk to the Board was authorised to proceed with engaging Nurole to recruit an additional Governor with specialist knowledge of the HE sector.</p> <p>c) Minute 741 - Proposed Membership of Sub Committees 2025-2026 [NG/64/07], BG/137/07 – the Membership of Sub Committees was approved</p> <p>d) Minute 742– Calendar of Meetings for the Next Academic Year [NG/64/08] BG/137/08 – the Calendar of Meetings was approved.</p> <p>Information</p> <p>e) Minute 737 - Update on Face-to-Face Meetings BG-137/09 [NG/64/04] – was noted.</p>
3007	<p>BRIEFING SHEET – Remuneration Committee, 6 May 2025 [R 56] BG/137/10</p> <p><i>There were no items for onward referral to the Board.</i></p> <p>Kevin Gould asked about the expression 'terminated', which was then clarified as referring to Colin Hughes' stepping down as Chair to the Board of Governors on 31st March 2025. It was agreed to adjust the minute to replace the word 'terminated' with 'stepping down.'</p>
3008	<p>BRIEFING SHEET - Strategy and Performance Committee, 4 June 2025 [SP 24] BG/137/11</p> <p>Approval</p> <p>a) Minute 498 – Marketing, Student Recruitment and Admissions Recovery Plan [SP/24/16], BG/137/12 – the paper was discussed as part of the Know Your Business section at the beginning of the meeting and the overall approach was approved.</p> <p>Information</p> <p>b) Minute 487 – KPI Scorecard [AR/24/04], BG/137/13 – was noted. Juliet Oosthuysen informed the Committee that a trajectory indicator would be applied to the KPI Scorecard to provide contextual information at a glance, to assist ease of understanding in the future.</p>
3009	<p>BRIEFING SHEET - Audit and Risk Committee, 14 May 2025 [AR 134], BG/137/14</p> <p>Approval</p> <p>a) Minute 2092 – Internal Audit Plan for 2025-2026 and Audit Charter [AR/134/10], BG/137/15 - the Audit Plan was approved, noting that CECOS would again be part of the internal audit.</p> <p>Information</p> <p>b) Minute 2057 – Accounting Treatment of Student Village BG/137/16 – the paper was noted. Jonathan Chapman reported that BDO had conducted a comprehensive analysis of the accounting treatment process for the Student Village.</p>
3010	<p>BRIEFING SHEET - Sustainability and Resources Committee, 11 June 2025 [SR 27], BG/137/17</p> <p>Approval</p> <p>a) None</p> <p>Information</p> <p>a) Minute 754 - The Management Accounts to 30 April 2025 (Period 9) [SR/27/09], BG/137/18 – this was noted by the Committee.</p> <p>b) Minute 761- Pensions Update [SR/27/16], BG/137/19 – the Update was noted.</p> <p>c) Minute 762 – Pay Award [SR/27/17], BG/137/20 – the Pay Award update was noted by the Committee.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 
4 FOR DISCUSSION AND/OR APPROVAL (marked below accordingly)	
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3013	<p>[Redacted]</p> <p>[Redacted]</p> <p>[Redacted]</p> <p>[Redacted]</p> <p>[Redacted]</p> <p>[Redacted]</p> <p>[Redacted]</p> <p>[Redacted]</p>
3014	<p>[Redacted]</p> <p>[Redacted]</p> <p>[Redacted]</p> <p>[Redacted]</p> <p>[Redacted]</p> <p>[Redacted]</p> <p>[Redacted]</p> <p>[Redacted]</p>
3015	<p>The Memorandum of Understanding – Student Union BG/137/25 was presented for information by Ian Blachford, Chief Operating Officer.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> On an annual basis, the memorandum of Understanding with the Student Union is refreshed and approved by the Board of Trustees of the Student Union and the University. This version, with minor amendments since the last version, is now presented for approval by the Board of Governors and will shortly be approved by the Board of Trustees of the Student Union. There are no substantive changes. Those changes that have been made reflect the renaming of the University, the renaming of the Student Union and the refresh on areas impacted by the implementation of the Target Operating Model. The section on student accommodation will also need to be updated in line with the new student village, in the following year. <p>Members and attendees commented as follows:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It was noted that a minor edit was required to the branding and would be resubmitted following the meeting. <p>Post meeting note: A new copy was filed with a rebranded & updated Health and Safety appendix and references to "Staffordshire University" were amended to University of Staffordshire.</p> <p>The Memorandum of Understanding was approved at the meeting subject the above changes.</p>
3016	<p>The Board of Governors Pre Sessions BG/137/26 paper was introduced for discussion by Ian Blachford, Chief Operating officer.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It had been noted by the recent Nominations and Governance Committee that during face-to-face sessions held by the Chair of the Board of Governors with the current governor membership, that governors wish to engage more with UEB colleagues in order to understand more about the University, and to further strengthen links to these colleagues. The following is therefore proposed: That the four Board meetings commence at 2:00pm rather than 2:30pm. The first hour (occupying within this the 30-minute slot that was 'know your business') is used as an in-person collective governor visit to a specific function or area of the university, led by the relevant member of UEB, so that they can engage governors with their area of expertise. These four sessions could be augmented with a fifth session at the annual strategic event held each year, across the lunchtime period, as an 'energiser'. Depending on the subject matter, a deep dive may also be held in the board room, for example if there is nothing to 'see'. The Board trials for 12 months (academic year 2025-2026) this approach to see if it is valued and engaged with by the governors. In the first instance, we would ask governors to outline which areas they would like to engage with, so that we could build a programme. In this manner, it is believed that we can achieve the UEB connection without any risk to the robust, open and transparent conversations the Executive and the Board need to have, and not crossing/blurring lines on governance and leadership and management. Furthermore, this will mean that the call on UEB colleagues' time will be both proportional and with purpose, which, with our smaller UEB, time is especially important, as there is much work to be done, across fewer leaders. In addition, at the October Board meeting, it is proposed that the Board visit the Student Village site, including a visit to the top of the Student Hub building. For clarity, this would be a 2pm start for this activity, but Governors would be required to attend at 1:30pm to allow time to be wardrobe. The tour will take about one and a half hours and then the Board meeting itself would commence at circa 3:30pm. This can be accommodated, as the business at the October meeting is usually lighter, as we do not have a cycle of sub committees reporting into this main Board meeting. The co-opted governors from Sustainability and Resources Committee would also be invited to attend the tour. <p>Members and attendees commented as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ian Blachford commented that he would email governors after the meeting for potential themes. This would enable a plan of visits and/or discussions to be developed based on the most highly rated suggestions. Kim Newell Chebator asked about the timing of the Strategic event and whether it was scheduled at a point that would allow it to have a meaningful impact on the University. Ian Blachford responded that by November there would be a clear view of financials, thereby avoiding hypothetical discussions. Martin Pugh expressed his agreement with the rationale behind the 2pm meeting slots and thanked the governors for their commitment in attending the extraordinary meetings held throughout the 2024 - 2025 cycles to agree on the Target Operating Model (TOM) and the pension phase three reforms. It was agreed that a draft agenda for the Strategic event would be available in October and circulated to governors for discussion. Martin Pugh also requested that the agenda for the Strategic events be made available earlier in the cycle. This would allow for meaningful discussions around strategy, rather than focusing solely on financial matters. This request aligned with feedback received from other governors and would help maximise the value governors can contribute. Precious Ogbein noted that the Board had previously expressed interest in increasing student engagement. It was agreed that that Precious Ogbein would present suggestions on how this might be achieved. Martin Pugh emphasised that the governors are keen to gain deeper insights from students. Raheel Nawaz thanked members who attended the recent Gradex event. He noted that such engagement has helped foster a positive atmosphere on campus, particularly amongst the academic staff and students. <p>There were no further comments and the report was noted.</p>
5 FOR INFORMATION	
3017	<p>The Students' Union Report BG/137/27 was presented for information by Precious Ogbein who outlined the key areas of work and impacts since the last Board of Governors Report in March 2025, including:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocating on student issues & supporting university with addressing issues • Celebrating students & successes • Referenda, Election and Constitutional update in line with University's name change • Education Act compliance report. <p>Members and attendees commented as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members inquired about the composition of the Joint Student Experience Committee. It was noted that Executive Deans attend, along with Raheel Nawaz and that the group now functions as a responsive forum, having evolved from the former SU Liaison Committee. It was highlighted that the Committee has become a forum for exercising real-time influence on initiatives. Its effectiveness is demonstrated by the collaborative creation of various initiatives among stakeholders. • Kim Newell Chebator noted the high student withdrawal figures referenced in the report. Whilst these were noted, a correlation had been observed between students who engage with the Students' Union which resulted in reduced withdrawal rates. It was agreed that involvement with the Students' Union contributes positively to student retention efforts. • Martin Pugh commended the report for its comprehensive nature. <p>There were no further comments and the report was noted.</p>
3018	<p>*Academic Board minutes: 298 5 March 2025 * BG/137/28</p> <p>The Academic Board minutes were noted.</p>
6 ADDITIONAL MATTERS	
3019	<p>Any additional matters</p> <p>None</p>
3020	<p>Next Meeting: Wednesday 1 October 2025 – (1:30pm PPE/tour and 3:30pm Board start) (CA 105/6 First floor, Catalyst Building, Leek Road)</p>