

MINUTES

BOARD OF GOVERNORS, BG-119					
Date:	Tuesday 24 November 2020	Time:	1400		
Location:	Boardroom, University House/online Teams meeting				

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.

Members		
Professor Liz Barnes	Vice Chancellor	Р
Connor Bayliss	Student Governor (President, Students' Union)	Р
Glenn Earlam	External Member	Р
Tony Evans	External Member	Р
Tuesday Forrest	Student Governor (Vice-President, Students' Union)	Р
Hannah Gibbard	Staff Governor (professional support staff)	Р
Kevin Gould	External Member	Р
Joanne Hannaford	External Member	Р
John Henderson (Deputy Chair)	External Member	А
Dr Cathryn Hickey	External Member	А
Colin Hughes (Chair)	External Member	Р
Baljinder Kuller	External Member	Р
Dr Simon Smith	Staff Governor (academic staff)	Р
Jonathan Vardon	External Member	Р
Sara Williams	External Member	Р
In attendance		
Ian Blachford	Chief Operating Officer and Clerk to the Board of Governors	IA
Professor Ieuan Ellis	Pro Vice Chancellor – Place & Engagement	IA
Professor Martin Jones	Deputy Vice Chancellor	IA
Sally McGill	Chief Financial Officer	IA
Andrew Proctor	Pro Vice Chancellor - Digital	IA
Lauren Rooke	Assistant Clerk to the Board of Governors (minutes)	IA

P = Present (via Teams); A = Apologies; IA = In Attendance (via Teams)

Know Your Business (1400 - 1445) – A presentation was received from Smita Jamdar of Shakespeare Martineau on governors' responsibilities as charity trustees and under the OfS regulatory framework, including sections on the Nolan principles.

Members commented as follows:

• Jo Hannaford asked for clarification on the term "decolonisation". Members discussed this concept and its application at Staffordshire, with several examples and interpretations being considered.

1 ME	1 MEETING MANAGEMENT			
2687	Apologies for absence were received from John Henderson and Cathryn Hickey.			
2688	There were no new declarations of interest.			
2689	The Minutes of the last meeting of the Board of Governors , 24 September 2020 BG/119/01 were confirmed as a true and accurate record.			
2690	Matters arising:			
	• Minute 2604 - Membership of the Board of Governors for 2020/21 – it was noted that owing to significant workload and competing priorities, Professor Dame Sue Hill had deferred joining the Board of Governors until the new academic year.			

2 STRATEGIC OVERVIEW

The Board received a report on **Strategic Developments and Organisational Performance** BG/119/02 from the Vice Chancellor, covering the following main areas:

- External context since the last report in September 2020 (including current position with blended learning and teaching, and student support)
- University performance (including several recent awards, Innovation Enterprise Zone, Social Mobility Pledge and CSS)
- Student (the "travel window") and staff developments, including new appointments

Members and attendees commented as follows:

- Colin Hughes commended Andrew Proctor on his award for Chief Digital Officer of the Year in the Computing Digital Technology Leaders Award.
- Liz Barnes noted that even in these exceptional circumstances, there was still much to note in terms of positive news, highlighting examples such as progress on the Catalyst building and the Healthcare Centre of Excellence, and the launch of the Social Mobility Pledge later that week. However, Liz further noted that emerging government policy appeared as though it would trend towards a general focus on pure, rather than contextualised, metrics, and there was a general feeling of disappointment in this trend throughout the sector. Sara Williams noted the importance of government acknowledging that high pay did not always equate to high value, in terms of graduate outcomes.
- Colin Hughes asked about a perceived threat to the autonomy of UK HEIs and Liz Barnes noted that there had been very encouraging levels of co-operation throughout the sector over the past few months institutions had been speaking "with one voice" following frequent meetings and communication.
- Members discussed government restrictions and directives for the Christmas period, with Liz Barnes noting that the
 University had been instructed to finish all face-to-face teaching by 9 December. Tony Evans asked about the profile
 of students staying over Christmas and Liz Barnes clarified that as usual for the University, there would be a mixed
 profile including care-leavers, students from the YMCA and international students. Connor Bayliss added that the
 Students' Union had seen small numbers of students also deciding to stay in order to avoid perceived difficulties
 travelling back in the new year.
- Glenn Earlam asked about current face-to-face teaching and it was clarified that for timetabled hours, this ranged from around 3hrs to 16hrs p/w for studio-based courses, plus drop-in sessions. Staff across the institution were thinking creatively in order to meet the challenges presented by 2m social distancing and it was acknowledged that these face-to-face teaching hours were unusually high within the sector. Colin Hughes commended the University's overall response to the pandemic, which had enabled success such as these, and Kevin Gould echoed this. Hannah Gibbard highlighted the potential impact on the wellbeing of academic staff, and Liz Barnes noted that the Christmas break had been extended, with the University closing on 18 December. Tony Evans proposed that an all-staff statement of thanks be issued from the Board of Governors, and this was agreed.
- Baljinder Kuller asked about the likely impact on the University's financial and recruitment position for summer 2021.
 Liz Barnes confirmed that whilst the University was constantly looking ahead and conscious of likely recruitment pressures for next summer, the actual cashflow impact was unlikely to be significant. (It was noted that an OfS consultation would very shortly be released regarding the possibility of moving to post-results offer-making.)
- Kevin Gould commended the University's co-operation with the Students' Union, with Liz Barnes agreeing that this was a very positive working relationship.
- Jonathan Vardon noted the importance of the University working now to differentiate itself and its brand at this point, in order to boost confidence for those looking to enrol in 2021.

3 SUB-COMMITTEE BRIEFING SHEETS AND REFERRED ITEMS

The **BRIEFING SHEET - Remuneration Committee, 29 Sept 2020** BG/119/03 was introduced by the Committee Deputy Chair.

Approval

a. *Minute 7 - Committee Terms of Reference*, BG/119/04

The Remuneration Committee Terms of Reference 2020-21 were approved.

Information

b. *Minute 13 - Annual Statement of Senior Postholder Remuneration 2019-20*, BG/119/05

It was noted that this had been approved by Remuneration Committee and would be made available on the University's website.

The **BRIEFING SHEET - Nominations and Governance Committee, 29 Sept 2020** BG/119/06 was introduced by the Committee Deputy Chair.

Approval

a. *Minute 590 - Committee Terms of Reference*, BG/119/07

The Nominations and Governance Committee Terms of Reference 2020-21 were approved.

Information

b. *Minute 591 – Board Effectiveness Review 2020*, BG/119/08

The paper, summarising the results of the review and setting out the workstreams, was noted.

c. *Minute 593 – CUC HE Code of Governance (Sept 2020 revision)*, BG/119/09

The paper, which set out the addition to the Code of a proposal to appoint a Senior Independent Governor, was noted.

The **BRIEFING SHEET - Strategy and Performance Committee, 22 Oct 2020** BG/119/10 was introduced by the Committee Chair.

Approval

a. *Minute 171 - Committee Terms of Reference*, BG/119/11

The Strategy and Performance Committee Terms of Reference 2020-21 were approved.

Information

b. *Minute 173 - Evaluating Delivery of the University Strategic Plan (Innovative and Applied Learning)*, BG/119/12

The report, which brought together high-level information on the achievement of this pillar of the strategic plan, was noted.

c. *Minute 174 - KPI Report*, BG/119/13

The paper, which reported on the University's top five KPIs, was noted.

Minute 175 – Student progression report (outcomes and attainment), BG/119/14

The report, which gave an update on the current position, was noted.

e. *Minute 178 - League Table Performance Report*, BG/119/15

The report, which highlighted that the University had dropped in all three major UK league tables, was noted.

The **BRIEFING SHEET - Audit and Risk Committee, 27 Oct 2020** BG/119/16 was introduced by the Committee Chair.

Approval

a. *Minute 1726 - Committee Terms of Reference*, BG/119/17

The Audit and Risk Committee Terms of Reference 2020-21 were approved.

b. Minute 1729 - RSM Internal Audit Annual Report 2019-20, BG/119/18

The Chief Operating Officer introduced the report, noting the overall rating for the internal audit work carried out through 2019-20. The Internal Audit Annual Report 2019-20 was approved.

Members and attendees commented as follows:

 Kevin Gould noted that the overall opinion rating had not decreased, despite a challenging set of audits for the year 2019-20.

c. Minute 1730 - Annual Report of the Audit & Risk Committee 2019-20, BG/119/19

The Chief Operating Officer introduced the report, which gave an overview of the committee's work during the year. The Audit and Risk Committee Annual Report 2019-20 was approved.

d. Minute 1733 - University-Level Risk Registers, BG/119/20

The Chief Operating Officer clarified that these top-level risk registers had been approved by both SLT and Audit and Risk Committee, at their most recent meetings. The University-level Risk Registers were approved.

e. Minute 1734 – Review of risk appetites, BG/119/21

The Chief Operating Officer introduced this paper, noting that the overall risk appetite was not proposed to change, some minor amends were proposed to the sub-risks. The risk appetite review was approved.

The **BRIEFING SHEET - Sustainability and Resources Committee, 03 Nov 2020** BG/119/22 was introduced by the Committee Chair.

Approval

a. *Minute 318 - Committee Terms of Reference*, BG/119/23

The Sustainability and Resources Committee Terms of Reference 2020-21 were approved.

b. Minute 326 (i and ii) – Draft Financial Statements for y/e 31 July 2020 (Annual Review and Financial Statements 2019/20, BG-19-24; KPMG audit highlights memorandum and management letter, BG/119/25 (both available separately on SharePoint)

It was noted that these documents had been considered at both Audit and Risk Committee and Sustainability and Resources Committee. The Chief Financial Officer highlighted that due to 2019-20 having been an exceptional year, KPMG had not yet signed off on their opinion as their QA process for all HE clients was ongoing. The Annual Review and Financial Statements 2019/20 and KPMG audit highlights memorandum and management letter were approved.

Information

c. Minute 324 - Student enrolment 2020/21 and financial implications, BG/119/26

The report (which has been updated since the Committee meeting) was noted, with the Chief Financial Officer highlighting that enrolments were currently slightly higher compared to budget.

Members and attendees commented as follows:

- Joanne Hannaford asked for clarification on current numbers against budget and it was confirmed that enrolments
 were currently up by around 70 students. This year had seen a higher first-year retention rate than in previous
 years but a slight decrease for second and third-year students.
- Glenn Earlam asked about timely completion rates and Martin Jones confirmed that this was improving slightly. Liz Barnes noted that the overall completion rate was usually around 80-90%. (This was also used as a performance metric but the specific timely completion measure had enabled a change of focus with staff.)
- Jonathan Vardon highlighted the progress made in relation to apprenticeships numbers.
- Connor Bayliss asked about available data on increases in students deferring or taking gap years, and Liz Barnes clarified that there was no evidence that there was a rise in this.
- Tony Evans asked about the funding implications of retention issues. Liz Barnes confirmed that OfS top-up funding, which subsidised certain courses, was withdrawn when students failed to complete assessments within the prescribed time.
- d. *Minute 329 Students' Union Accounts 2018-19*, BG/119/27

The draft consolidated accounts were noted (having been presented to both Audit and Risk Committee and Sustainability and Resources Committee).

e. *Minute 330 - Management Accounts (to 31 Oct 2020)*, BG/119/28
The report was noted.

3 FOR DISCUSSION AND/OR APPROVAL (marked below accordingly)

- The Board of Governors received for approval the **Annual Ofsted Self-Assessment Report (SAR) and Quality Improvement Plan (QIP)** BG/119/29, presented by the Pro Vice Chancellor Place and Engagement. The following main points were noted:
 - Ofsted expected all institutions in scope for inspection to submit an annual self-assessment report (SAR) and quality improvement plan (QIP), demonstrating how an institution monitored the quality of its apprenticeship provision to meet Ofsted expectations.
 - From 18/19 Ofsted introduced a less prescriptive submission process allowing institutions to submit and update reports at any time of year. However, most institutions continued to submit an end of year report on the previous year's performance as this was how both Ofsted and ESFA monitored performance. At Staffordshire University, the SAR and QIP were standing items on the agenda for the Apprenticeship Strategy Group and the Quality Enhancement Committee and were informed by continuous monitoring at course level.
 - The SAR was designed to address the expectations of the Ofsted Education Inspection Framework (EIF) and the fine graded categories. There are 5 categories in all Overall Effectiveness, the final grade awarded, plus four component

- elements. For Overall Effectiveness, the University could now evidence the strengths of its provision to be graded as Good (grade 2), reflecting the progress made at institutional and course level since the full inspection visit in May 2019 and the reasonable progress judgement recorded in the January 2020 Ofsted monitoring visit. Many of the areas for improvement previously identified had already been actioned (examples were given).
- The University was working towards achieving Outstanding judgements for its apprenticeships provision. Currently some actions and areas of change were in the process of being embedded in practice to ensure consistency of approach across all areas of apprenticeship provision. For each of the component categories, Staffordshire University has considerable evidence to support a judgement of Good (grade 2), including positive data on retention and achievement and feedback from apprentices and employers. Again, actions to address areas for improvement are all subject to regular monitoring which should support early resolution. The University could produce extensive evidence to support a judgement of 'Outstanding' (grade 1) for the category Behaviour and Attitudes, and feedback from employers, including at the recent Ofsted 'interim' visit supported this grade (with over 95% of employers recently rating the University as good or excellent).
- The QIP was a live document reflecting the areas for improvement highlighted in the self-assessment report. As actions were resolved, they were removed from the QIP and where appropriate added to 'strengths'. As new issues emerged as foci for quality enhancement, they would be added for action. The QIP was not intended to record every issue with apprenticeships but concentrated on significant issues which could affect an inspector's judgement or grade of the relevant category.
- Both the SAR and QIP were now presented to Board of Governors for approval (having already been considered by Strategy and Performance Committee).

Members and attendees commented as follows:

Colin Hughes commended the progress made over the last twelve months.

The Board of Governors approved the SAR and QIP for submission.

- The Board of Governors received for approval the **Annual Statement on Research Integrity 2019-20** BG/119/30, presented by the Deputy Vice Chancellor. The following main points were noted:
 - The Concordat to Support Research Integrity, published in 2012 and revised in 2019, provided a national framework for high standards of research conduct and its governance. It set out commitments that institutions, researchers and funders should abide by to ensure that research integrity was upheld in the UK research environment.
 - Under the Concordat, institutions were obliged to produce an annual statement on research integrity, to be presented to their governing body.
 - The University's annual statement for the academic year 2019-20 outlined the actions and activities undertaken throughout the course of the academic year and the frameworks in place to foster and strengthen a culture of research integrity.
 - This statement built upon the 2018-19 statement, approved by Academic Board and the Board of Governors in June 2020. As highlighted in that previous paper, it was intended that the institution's annual statement be presented to each Autumn meeting of Academic Board and the Board of Governors the present statement thus reported on the full academic year 2019-20.
 - The Board of Governors were asked to note that the form of the statement was largely dictated by the Concordat, so the headings in the attached document were largely standardised. As such, this statement was to be viewed as akin to a statutory return. A gap analysis (and associated action plan) of compliance with the revised Concordat had been approved by the Research and Innovation Committee, which had responsibility for overseeing institutional compliance with the Concordat, in June.
 - Once approved, the statement would be made publicly available on our external facing website (as required by the Concordat) and would be sent for information to the secretariat of the signatories to the Concordat.

Members and attendees commented as follows:

NONE

The Board of Governors approved the annual statement of research integrity 2019-20.

- The Board of Governors received for approval a paper on **Fee Policy 2022/2023** BG/119/31, presented by the Deputy Vice Chancellor who noted the following proposed points:
 - Undergraduate Fees
 - The University would charge the maximum permitted fee, currently £9,250, to both new and continuing (entry 2017/18 onwards) Home full-time undergraduate students.
 - The University would charge the maximum permitted fee for accelerated degrees, currently £11,100.
 - Fees for new and continuing (entry 2017/18 onwards) Home part-time undergraduate students would be charged pro-rata at £77 per credit.

- Postgraduate Taught Fees
 - Apply an inflationary uplift to Bands 1 and 2 for full and part time postgraduate taught fees using the Retail Price Index, excluding mortgage interest payments (RPIX).
 - LPC, LLM and MBA fees would remain the same as those charged for 2021/22.
 - London based Masters courses would continue to be charged at a higher rate than Bands 1 and 2 to ensure we
 remain in line with our competitor institutions in London.
 - Fees for continuing part time postgraduate taught students would be fee protected and not uplifted during their course registration.
- Postgraduate Research Fees
 - Full time postgraduate research fees for Home students would continue to be set in accordance with UKRI guidance.
 - Fees for continuing postgraduate research students would be fee protected and not uplifted during their course registration.
- International Fees
 - Charge international undergraduate, postgraduate taught and postgraduate research fees as detailed in report.
 - Fees for continuing international students would be fee protected and not uplifted during their course registration.
 - International students who paid their fees in full prior to enrolment would receive a £500 early payment discount.

Members and attendees commented as follows:

- Jonathan Vardon asked to see competitor market analysis and Martin Jones confirmed that he would provide this outside of the meeting.
- Glenn Earlam asked how likely it was that the government would reduce the £9,250 fee. Liz Barnes noted that anecdotally, it was believed that discussions had not completely closed on this. (Martin Jones also highlighted the link between the perceived value of a course and its delivery mode, with remotely-delivered courses sometimes being seen as lower-value.)

The Board of Governors approved the proposed tuition fee policy for 2022-23.

The Board of Governors received for approval the **Annual Quality and Standards and Student Success Report 2019-20** BG/119/32 (<u>full report available separately on SharePoint as appendix C</u>), presented by the Deputy Vice Chancellor. The Board noted that this detailed report and its accompanying action plan, which had already been received by Academic Board, set out of the processes and mechanisms used by the University to continue to enhance and improve the quality of its provision and of the student academic experience, and that a range of metrics had been considered in year through the sub-committee structure. Annex B reported on the delivery of the 2019-20 plan.

Members and attendees commented as follows:

- Martin Jones noted his thanks to the staff who had contributed to the report.
- Colin Hughes highlighted that the report was a useful example of how governors received assurance around academic standards (as referenced earlier in the Know Your Business presentation).

The Board of Governors approved the Annual Quality and Standards and Student Success report 2019-20.

- The Board received for discussion the **Access and Participation Plan 2020-25 annual report** BG/119/33, presented by the Pro Vice Chancellor Place and Engagement. The following main points were noted:
 - Our 2020-2025 Access & Participation Plan (APP) had been agreed with the OfS in November 2019. The accompanying
 annual report sought to assure Governors that the University continued to build on its excellent track record for
 promoting access and student success across all target groups and that the new plan would support and extend
 further.
 - As previously reported, our Access and Participation figures showed significant positive shifts in some targets but
 negative movement in two others (both relating to BAME students). Targeted interventions were being implemented
 as a focus for BAME student metrics alongside a cultural piece linked to The Race Equality Charter and based on the
 adoption of inclusive practice across all APP strands.
 - The University was now building models for delivery of targeted actions, based on analysis of need, robust evidence-based methodologies and clear evaluation leading to monitored and demonstrable impact. Our GAME project would also seek to enable research into personalisation of student engagement through gathering rich data and considering the use of artificial intelligence to support students.
 - Reporting confirmation was awaited from the OfS, however the University continued to work in line with previous
 requirements for monitoring returns from 2020 onwards. Drafting and review of access and participation progress
 was still planned by 15 January each year, reporting through the Quality Enhancement and Strategy and Performance
 Committees prior to submitting to the OfS. Impact and evaluation activity ran through each strand.

• The report highlighted progress against metrics, key activities undertaken, gave an update on programmes of action currently in train and future focus.

Members and attendees commented as follows:

- Colin Hughes asked about the proposed timeline and future reporting to Governors. Ieuan Ellis clarified that the University was currently awaiting guidance from OfS on the new reporting requirements for submission of the annual report and that the APP was likely to remain a standing item for Strategy and Performance Committee.
- The Board received for discussion the **Development Board annual report** BG/119/34, presented by the Pro Vice Chancellor Place and Engagement. The following main points were noted:
 - Philanthropy played a critical role in achieving the University's strategic vision and goals and as a Civic University, Staffordshire was committed to addressing societal issues and transforming the lives of the local community and its students.
 - Since its inception in 2013, Staffordshire University Development and Alumni Relations (DAR) had fundraised over £2.5million from generous donations from the University family and external funds from trusts and foundations, corporate partners and supporters. Seven bursary and scholarship schemes had been introduced to students, as currently there were no standard government funded bursaries available.
 - 2019/20 was Year Three of a five-year plan with an ambition to raise £4million by 2022 (as approved by the Development Board in 2017 and shared with SLT and Governors in September 2017). The plan supported and aligned to school/service plans, priorities and aimed to significantly increase philanthropic income, attract alumni and supporters who were keen to invest in the future of the University and transform the lives of its students.
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 - The results of securing philanthropic funding had proved life changing for Staffordshire students over 500 bursaries
 had been distributed, 36 scholarships and 40 opportunity awards made alongside a host of student prizes. Donor
 numbers had trebled, and the number of alumni volunteers had seen impressive growth.
 - The fundraising activity plans for 2019-2020 academic year had been impacted by COVID-19, and Development and Alumni Relations had adapted their approach and engagement tactics. Embracing the opportunity to connect through virtual environments, social media and digital platforms, DAR have offered support to alumni and their businesses, reached out to new alumni to connect on a global scale, nurtured existing alumni relationships and made sure donors were kept informed and stewarded well during the crisis, leading to further and increased donations.

Members and attendees commented as follows:

- Glenn Earlam asked about for clarification on different types of donation. Ieuan Ellis noted that a significant contribution was made "in kind" via partners, on top of the cash donations received. It was proposed that Simon Clarke, Chair of Development Board, be invited to a future Board of Governors meeting to discuss further.
- The Board received for approval the **Prevent annual report 2019-20** BG/119/35, presented by the Chief Operating Officer, who noted that this year the OfS had been interested in how the University's approach had been adapted during the pandemic.

Members and attendees commented as follows

• Liz Barnes noted that it was acknowledged nationally across the sector that the pandemic had heightened student vulnerabilities around issues such as drugs and radicalisation.

The Board of Governors approved the Prevent annual report 2019-20.

4 FOR INFORMATION

The Board of Governors received for information the **Students' Union Report** BG/119/36, presented by the President – Students' Union, who noted that despite a remote start to the year, the SU officer team had an excellent working relationship.

Members and attendees commented as follows:

• Liz Barnes commended the profile and the work of the Students' Union this year during the pandemic.

2705 The Board of Governors received for information the **Partnerships financial overview** BG/119/37, presented by the Pro Vice Chancellor – Place and Engagement. It was noted that partnerships strategy should be the basis for a discussion at the January 2021 strategic weekend.

2706	The *Draft Academic Board Minutes: 4 November 2020 (Unconfirmed)* BG/119/38 were received for information.				
5 ADI	5 ADDITIONAL MATTERS				
2707	How have we made a positive impact on our students today?				
	It was agreed that the continued strengthening of the relationship between the University and the Students' Union was very important, as was the focus on the Access and Participation Plan and its principles.				
2708	Any additional matters:				
	 On behalf of the Board of Governors, the Chair thanked Professor Ieuan Ellis, who was to leave the University at Christmas, for his commitment to the University's success over the past four years. 				
2709	Next meeting: Wednesday 21 April 2021 (Boardroom, University House)				