

MINUTES

BOARD OF GOVERNORS, BG-126					
Date:	Wednesday 21 September 2022	Time:	1430		
Location:	CA105/6, Catalyst, Leek Rd				

- 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		
Hannah Blackburn	Student Governor (President, Students' Union)	
Jonathan Chapman	External Member	Р
Kevin Gould	External Member	Р
Saima Hussain	Staff Governor (professional services staff)	Р
Colin Hughes (Chair)	External Member	Р
Professor Martin Jones	Vice Chancellor	Р
Baljinder Kuller	External Member	Р
Juliet Oosthuysen	External Member	Р
Vikki Sylvester	External Member	А
Dr Simon Smith	Staff Governor (academic staff)	Р
Hayden Tsang	Student Governor (Vice-President, Students' Union)	Р
Jonathan Vardon	External Member	А
Sara Williams	External Member	А
In attendance		·
Ian Blachford	Chief Operating Officer and Clerk to the Board of Governors	IA
Dr Annabel Kiernan	Pro Vice Chancellor - Education	IA
Professor Kevin Hetherington	Deputy Vice Chancellor	IA
Sally McGill	Chief Financial Officer	IA
Professor Raheel Nawaz	Pro Vice Chancellor – Digital Transformation	IA
Lauren Rooke	Assistant Clerk to the Board of Governors (minutes)	IA

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

Know Your Business session, 1430 – 1500:

A session on first impressions and priorities was delivered by Sapreena Kumari, Executive Director of Student Recruitment and Admissions; and Dawn Vos, Executive Director of Marketing and Communications.

Members and attendees commented as follows:

- Juliet Oosthuysen highlighted the key nature of the rebranding exercise, noting that buy-in was required at the highest level.
- Colin Hughes asked about timing and Martin Jones noted that a short update would be given on this in his VC report elsewhere on the agenda.

Jonathan Chapman asked about Executive and Governor support and Dawn Vos confirmed that this had been appreciated so
far, and that any further assistance that Governors could give in helping to raise the University's profile nationally would also
be invaluable.

1 MEETING MANAGEMENT				
2854	Apologies for Absence were received from Victoria Sylvester, Jonathan Vardon and Sara Williams. Saima Hussain was welcomed to her first meeting of the Board of Governors.			
2855	There were no new Declarations of Interest.			
2856	Membership of the Board of Governors for 2022-23:			
	Constitution External Members	Membership Dr Jonathan Chapman Kevin Gould Colin Hughes (Chair) Baljinder Kuller Juliet Oosthuysen Victoria Sylvester Jonathan Vardon (Deputy Chair) Sara Williams VACANCY X2		
	Student Governors	Hannah Blackburn (President, Students' Union) Hayden Tsang (Vice President, Students' Union)		
	Staff Governors	Dr Simon Smith (Academic Staff governor) Saima Hussein (Professional Support governor)		
	Vice Chancellor	Professor Martin Jones		
	In attendance	Ian Blachford, Chief Operating Officer & Clerk to the Board Professor Kevin Hetherington, Deputy Vice Chancellor Dr Annabel Kiernan, Pro Vice Chancellor - Education Sally McGill, Chief Financial Officer & Deputy Chief Executive Professor Raheel Nawaz, Pro Vice Chancellor - Digital Transformation		
	Co-opted Committee Members for 2022-23:			
	Mohit Dhingra Mike Herbert Ian Jenkinson	Audit and Risk Committee Sustainability and Resources Committee Sustainability and Resources Committee		
2857	The Minutes of the last meeting of the Board of Governors, 29 June 2022 BG/126/01 and Notes from Strategic Event, 11 July 2022 BG/126/02, were confirmed as true and accurate records (subject to minor corrections to the latter to a) note that Simon smith had not been absent at the July Strategic Event and b) to add clarification around branding discussions at the event.)			
2858	Matters arising:			
	• Strategic Events – a) it was noted that the Summer BofG and executive Strategic Event had taken place on Monday 11 July 2022, at Staffordshire University London; and b) it was further noted that the previously scheduled 17 Nov			

- Strategic Events a) it was noted that the Summer BofG and executive Strategic Event had taken place on Monday
 11 July 2022, at Staffordshire University London; and b) it was further noted that the previously scheduled 17 Nov
 2022 Strategic Event would no longer take place.
- **Development Board update** it was noted that this paper, which was originally scheduled for this meeting, would now go to Sustainability & Resources Committee on 9 November 2022, following a review by UEB to align the external philanthropic fundraising strategy with the new University Strategy and strategic KPIs. (It would subsequently be referred through to Board of Governors on 16 November 2022.)

2 STRATEGIC OVERVIEW

The Board received an update on **Strategic Developments and Organisational Performance** BG/126/03, from the Vice Chancellor, covering the following main areas:

- External context, including an overview of current HE consultations
- University performance, including an overview of recent student surveys and nominations

- University business (including graduation ceremonies and Welcome Week 2022)
- Staffing, including new appointments, recent senior staff accolades and current recruitment timelines.

Members and attendees commented as follows:

- Colin Hughes noted the University's recent drop in several league tables. Martin Jones confirmed that metrics had
 recently changed to the University's detriment and that certain specific areas were lowering the overall result
 dramatically. Kevin Hetherington highlighted his role chairing the League Table Group, which was made up of key
 non-Exec stakeholders throughout the University (non-Exec) who were able to effectively identify actions (rather than
 simply to debate the problems).
- Jonathan Chapman underlined the importance of thorough quality assurance (and course leadership) in areas in which
 we were losing ground. Kevin Hetherington noted examples of interventions such as changing credit structure, clearer
 communications to students, the provision of alternative part-time pathways, comprehensive ethical training where
 relevant (e.g., policing). Martin Jones emphasised Strategy & Performance Committee's key role in this, and Annabel
 Kiernan echoed these comments, highlighting the sharpening of the focus on continuous monitoring across the
 University.

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

The Board of Governors received for discussion a **Student Recruitment Update 2022-23** BG/126/04, presented by the Pro Vice Chancellor – Education. The following main points were noted:

- This year, the sector had experienced an unusually slow clearing with significant numbers of unplaced applicants 14
 days after results day. Data HE had reported that almost 42% of full cycle applicants were still unplaced and there
 was concern in the sector about progression routes for these applicants.
- National areas of buoyancy had been in Business, Computing and Psychology. Presently there was a 15% and 20% increase in applicants placed during clearing in Lower and Medium institutions respectively, while Higher institutions continued to see a reduction in placed applicants by 10%.
- Overall, on campus clearing (including early and post a level result clearing) applications and firms were 20.5% (512 vs 425) and 18.6% (434 vs 366) ahead of our position last year, respectively.
- As at 9 September, the Staffordshire University Home undergraduate on campus recruitment position was:
 - o 2727 unconditional firm acceptances against an enrolment target of 3128.
 - Based on predictive modelling and current data, we anticipated a total of 2552 enrolments at the end of cycle, if the current trajectory continued, and firm to enrolment conversion was consistent with previous performance.
- The PGT/PGCE Home position was:
 - 296 unconditional firm and 93 condition firm acceptances against an enrolment target of 723 enrolments. Based on our predictive modelling, we are anticipating a total of 389 enrolments at the end of the cycle.
- The international recruitment picture across UG and PG was positive overall.
- The upcoming cost of living crisis had gone some way to apportioning significant shifts to applicant behaviour and choice, and this was reflected in our recruitment position at this point, a position shared with similar institutions such as Nottingham Trent and BCU.
- It was to be noted that all marketing activity was currently on hold due to the mourning period for The Queen (reflected across the sector with some universities choosing to stop activity for the full 12-day period).
- There had been some key changes to our approach to clearing, detailed in the report. A full and comprehensive debrief was scheduled for September, which would allow the gathering of further insights.

Members and attendees commented as follows:

- Juliet Oosthuysen asked about market analysis on the current position and trends, and it was confirmed that this would be available for the sector shortly (internal analysis would also be done). It was noted that anecdotally, competition for low-tariff institutions was currently sitting with e.g. Open University and degree apprenticeships.
- Simon Smith raised a point around offsetting deficits and the numbers of part-time students required to effectively
 offset the loss of a FT UG.
- Discussion continued around the high conversion rates on CAS for international students and the improvement of the clearing operation compared to previous years, which was already starting to deliver a small but promising uptick in 18-yr olds, which was promising.
- Kevin Gould asked for clarity on SUL recruitment numbers. Ian Blachford highlighted that some courses had been
 closed early on in the cycle, and feedback was showing that more and more students were looking for a less niche
 course offer, so that they could specialise after graduation and not before. Secondly, as there had been issues with
 eSports provision both at Stoke and SUL, the decision had been taken to not run eSports from SUL this year to
 safeguard the student experience for those in levels 5 and 6.

Baljinder Kuller asked about recruitment from China and Kevin Hetherington clarified that our research showed that
there was more to gain for us, given our academic portfolio and profile, in targeting Bangladesh, Pakistan, India, and
Africa.

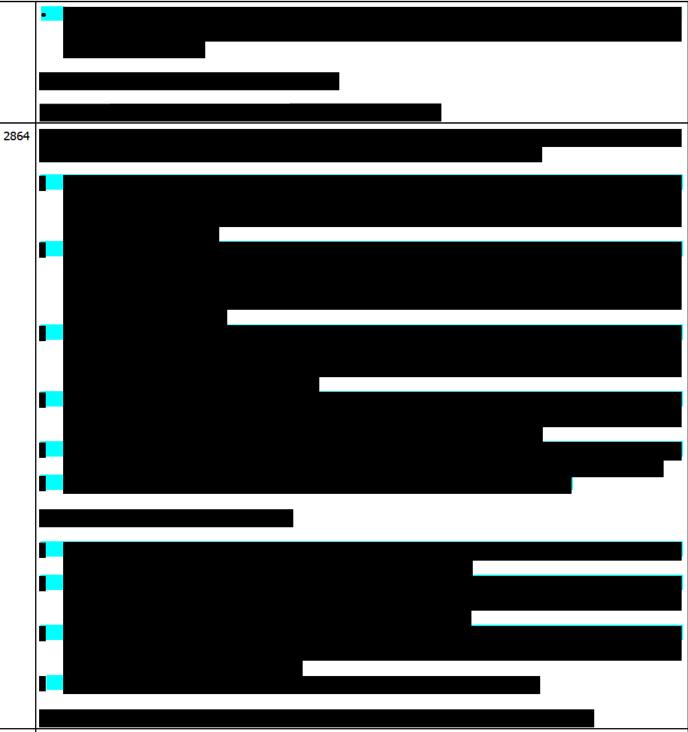
The Board received a report for discussion on the **Draft Financial Outturn 2021-22 (incl. July 22 Mgmt Accts)**BG/126/05, introduced by the Chief Financial Officer & Deputy Chief Executive. The following main points were noted:

- The Audited Annual Accounts would be scrutinised through Audit and Risk Committee, shared with Sustainability & Resources Committee, and approved by Board at the November meetings.
- The following tables were provided to give a summary of the University's financial performance for the year, which
 would be shown in more detail in the financial statements (Annual Accounts published within the Annual Review), and
 to explain the underlying results.
- Following the adoption of FRS102 in 2016, the University's in-year financial performance as shown in the Annual
 Accounts included pension adjustments arising from the annual re-statement of pension assets and liabilities (on an
 accounting basis), as well as exceptional items. The main impact of this approach was that the University accounts
 were much more volatile in terms of the "headline" results.
- A summary table was included within the covering paper, which would also be published within the Annual Review to
 assist readers, and an explanation of the columns and information included within this table was given within the
 paper.

Members and attendees commented as follows:

- Colin Hughes asked about the proposed non-pay operational savings required and Kevin Hetherington noted that
 discussions were already well underway on this with the Schools and this would be inbuilt into 5-year plans. Sally
 McGill highlighted that we provision currently made against inflation.
- Baljinder Kuller asked about the feasibility of these savings being deliverable within this financial year and Kevin Hetherington confirmed that the University was doing all it could to ensure that this was the case. A clearer plan was likely to develop within the next few weeks, but there were various measure under discussion.
- Annabel Kiernan noted that reforecasting would be done after 16 Oct 2022, by which point we would have a better sense of likely enrolments for International.
- Hayden Tsang asked about the requirement for Student Services to reduce spend and Sally McGill clarified that this
 would be done tactically this year (i.e. not via directly student-facing measures), to avoid detriment to the student
 experience.





The Board received for discussion the **Student Satisfaction Report 2022** BG/126/09, presented by the Pro Vice Chancellor – Education, who highlighted that there was currently a consultation underway regarding student surveys (incl NSS) and noted the following main points:

- The report set out results from the 2022 National Student Satisfaction Survey (NSS), Postgraduate Taught Experience
 Survey (PTES), the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) and the University's own Student Viewfinder
 Survey (SVS) for UG students. The NSS, PTES and PRES were run nationally by Ipsos Mori and Advance HE and were
 completed anonymously by students. The NSS was completed by students in the final year of their course.
- National Student Survey: We received good engagement with the survey from our student body, with a response
 rate of 77.6% which is 10pp above the sector. The results for this year were though disappointing, with the University
 experiencing a drop from the previous year in all key metrics apart from learning resources.
- Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES): The rate of overall experience had decreased by 0.2% from
 last year to 84.9%. The rate for Assessment and Feedback of 85.1% exceeded the University target rate of 83%. The
 rate for Teaching and Learning of 85.3% was up on last year. The question area experiencing the biggest increase
 on last year was Learning Resources and Support Services up 12.5pp to 84.7%. Along with overall experience, the

University had seen a decline in the question area Organisation and Management compared with last year down 4.6pp to 74.8%. Compared with the sector, Staffordshire was mostly in the highest quarter (the top 25% of institutions) for the question areas, in particular: Overall Experience, Assessment and Support and Teaching and Learning. The University was ranked 19th out of 90 institutions.

- Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES): Compared with last year, the University had experienced a decrease in all but one of the ten question groupings. Research Skills Development has seen the biggest fall on last year 21.8 pp, followed by Support and Guidance for your teaching, down 15.7pp and Induction, Progression Arrangements and Assessment, down 9.4pp. Only Research Culture had seen an increase on last year, up 1.3pp. When compared with the sector, Staffordshire was in the lowest quarter (the bottom 25% of institutions) for the majority of the measures. In particular: Resources, Responsibilities, Progression and Support. 133 of our 340 (39.1%) postgraduate research students answered the survey, this was a decrease on last year's response rate of 41.5% (131/316), a decrease of 2.4pp. The sector response rate this year was 31.4%, compared with 36.1% in 2021, a fall of 4.7pp.
- Student View Finder Survey (SVS): The SVS was an internal independent student survey undertaken by Staffordshire University of all undergraduate students studying at a main University campus who were not eligible for inclusion in the NSS. The SVS mirrored the NSS and helped us identify and act to continuously improve our NSS performance and student satisfaction more generally. The survey ran from 30 January to 30 April 2022.
- A more detailed breakdown of these headlines was given in the paper.

Members and attendees commented as follows:

- Hannah Blackburn highlighted that Q26 in the NSS, regarding the Union's support for academic interests, was felt by
 the Union to be very limiting. Annabel Kiernan clarified for the Board that the Students' Union had been involved in
 the recent consultation process around the NSS.
- Hayden Tsang asked about the 3% positive increase in the results for questions around learning resources and Annabel Kiernan noted that the results for this question seemed to have seen a similar increase across the sector.

The Board received for approval the **Collaborative Academic Provision Register 2022-23** BG/126/10, presented by the Pro Vice Chancellor – Education, who highlighted that a new Head of International Partners would start in October, who would bring together a review of existing partners in terms of sustainability and quality.

- The attached register of collaborative academic provision was a formal record of Staffordshire University's academic partnerships and apprentice employers as at August 2022. An external version of this document (without comments) would be published on the University website.
- Collaborative developments were closely linked to the University's recruitment and teaching and learning strategies
 while enhancing its national and regional profile. Partnership management had been restructured in 2021/2022 with
 new UK and international strategies to be shaped throughout 2023- including a collaborative portfolio review and new
 directions for growth.
- Consequently, developments in 2021/2022 had not focused on developing new partnerships, but on meeting commitments already made and adding courses with established partners. Course closures had also been effected where student numbers and financial performance were ongoing concerns.
- Strategic risks around recruitment, income levels, and the student experience continued to be closely monitored nationally and internationally. A key development was the Ofsted inspection of apprenticeship provision in January 2022, which received a good grading. Areas for improvement highlighted by Ofsted and NSS surveys in Police Constable Degree Apprenticeships were being addressed.
- Internationally, two key factors are worth noting: the termination of the partnership with DISTED due to prolonged poor financial performance as mentioned above, and the political and economic upheaval in Sri Lanka which is being followed closely including regular partner meetings to determine the University's position on this collaboration.

There were no comments from Members and attendees.

The Board of Governors approved the Collaborative Academic Provision Register 2022-23.

The Board of Governors received for approval the **Students' Union Memorandum of Understanding** BG/126/11, with the Chief Operating Officer highlighting the following main points:

- An Internal Audit Report brought to Audit and Risk Committee in June 2019 had initially highlighted the need to review
 the memorandum that existed between the Student Union and the University, as this had become dated and had not
 been reviewed for a number of years.
- Following this, a substantial overhaul of the memorandum was undertaken drawing from best practice across the sector. The draft revised Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), which represented the agreed position between the

- University and the Student Union (and had also been the subject of legal oversight) had been approved by the Board of Governors in June 2020.
- The document had recently been reviewed by the Chief Operating Officer and the Chief Executive of the Student's Union and was now presented for approval from the Board of Governors, as part of an annual review process.
- There was nothing contentious in this document and all parties had agreed to its content, documenting current University practice.

Members and attendees commented as follows:

• Juliet Oosthuysen asked for clarification on the position with the Stonewall Diversity Champion scheme and this was provided.

The Board received for approval a paper on **Pensions** BG/126/12 (circulated separately by email), the following main points were noted:

- The Board of Governors had previously agreed a proposal, as its meeting on 29 June 2022, to bring an end to the formal dispute with the trade unions regarding Phase One and Phase Two pension reforms.
- The Chief Operating Officer met with UCU and UNISON on 8th August 2022 and shared the proposal with them. This was confirmed in writing on the same day, and an offer to meet with the regional representatives was made in addition. The information that had been shared with the unions to bring to an end the formal disputes, was shared with all staff on 17 August 2022, recognising that a significant number of staff are not represented by either union. The deadline for each union response was 16th September 2022, in order that each union could engage actively with its membership on the proposal. (This was extended to 20th September 2022 to allow for the disruption caused by the period of mourning and state funeral.)
- The original proposed implementation date had been proposed to the Board of Governors as 1st August 2022.
 However, given the delays in the meeting taking place with the unions, and the need for a longer consideration period, the proposed date of implementation had been amended to 1st January 2023.
- The responses from UCU and UNISON, both indicating that their branches should reject the offer, were included within the paper.
- It was proposed that the University withdraw the offer of Tier Five and continued dialogue with the recognised trade
 unions, if they so wish, but presenting no further proposals unless these met the overall principles of the Phase One
 and Phase Two pension reforms, and that any such proposal be approved for consultation by the Board of Governors.

4 FOR INFORMATION

The **Students' Union Report** BG/126/13 was received by the Board for information, covering the following main areas: student survey results, Strategic Plan 2030, budget 2023/23, recent awards, Welcome Week 2022 and broader student issues.

Members and attendees commented as follows:

- Juliet Oosthuysen asked about the visibility of the Students' Union within the student community and work to increase
 engagement and involvement. Hannah Blackburn confirmed that the Union had recently become more involved in
 Open Days, welcome talks etc, in order to help improve student engagement and interaction. Hannah Blackburn also
 highlighted the challenges of some activities being scheduled prior to students' having received loan payments, making
 putting them out of reach financially of many in the student community.
- Baljinder Kuller asked about the increase in the use of the Food Hub and Hannah Blackburn noted that various initiatives were underway, including a breakfast club and provision of free sanitary protection. (It was noted that whilst food bank usage was increasing throughout the sector, the level of intervention provided by the SU at Staffs was exemplary.)
- Hayden Tsang highlighted the sector figures in the report on the high numbers of students considering dropping out due to food poverty.

The Board received for discussion the **Access and Participation Plan Variation Submission to the Ofs** BG/126/14, introduced by the Pro Vice Chancellor – Education, who noted the following main points:

- This report summarised the outcome of the Office for Students (OfS) APP monitoring review for the 2020-21 academic
 year, detailed the key areas highlighted by the OfS and summarised the steps taken to accelerate progress toward
 our targets.
- On 30 August 2022, the Office for Students (OfS) notified the University of the outcomes of the 2020-21 access and
 participation plan (APP) monitoring review. Their approach to monitoring consisted of a review of the following to
 determine whether progress had been made:
 - The updated access and participation data dashboard to assess provider's progress against the targets set in the plan and
 - o Access and participation expenditure information in annual financial returns if the provider submits them to us.
- The OfS had informed the University that no further action in relation to the review would be taken at this time.



 The report detailed both internal and OfS data in relation to the three targets identified by the OfS and discussed the strategic changes made to APP governance to accelerate progress.

Members and attendees commented as follows:

- Annabel Kiernan underlined that the front part of this item was the current/extant plan; the back part was the variation
 that was required to be submitted by end July. It also formed the basis of the new plan for next year onwards. OfS
 had informed the University of its attainment gaps but was not currently asking for monitoring of them, or extra
 actions.
- Hannah Blackburn asked about liaison with students in terms of the consultation and Annabel Kiernan provided clarification on this.
- A paper on the **LGPS pension valuation** BG/126/15, was received for information, with context provided by the Chief Financial Officer, who clarified that although shown as a positive number, this was an accounting valuation and remained negative in reality it was not a genuine actuarial valuation of the fund. The following main points were noted:
 - An actuarial valuation involved determining the value of pension benefits accrued by LGPS members and comparing
 this to the value of the assets held in respect of these pension benefits. This paper provided a summary of each of
 the three types of valuation highlighting specifically the purpose, frequency, approach and in what circumstance each
 valuation would be used.
 - From the University's perspective, these valuations had different purposes and were not comparable. (The two
 currently relevant to Staffordshire University were the funding valuation and the accounting valuation.) The last
 funding valuation currently available was the one as at 31 March 2019. A funding valuation as at 31 March 2022 was
 currently being carried out and the results would not be known until late 2022.
 - An accounting valuation had been provided by the LGPS scheme actuaries which would be used to prepare the University's published balance sheet as at 31 July 2022.
- The Board received for information a paper on **Apprenticeships Performance** BG/126/16, presented by the Deputy Vice Chancellor, who noted the following main points:
 - The paper provided information and analysis of performance and on Apprenticeships during the 2021/2022 Academic
 year and the retention and achievement data for the Apprentices due to complete within that year. The data was not
 yet complete or verified as final end-point assessment (EPA) information would not be available until October 2022.
 The paper also included recruitment information, and forecast for the coming year, comments on external and internal
 quality assurance and income and financial assurance.
- 2873 The Board received for information the *Academic Board minutes (unconfirmed): 15 June 2022* BG/126/17.
- 2874 The Board received for information the *Calendar of Corporate and Public Events 2022-23* BG/126/18.

5 ADDITIONAL MATTERS

- 2875 There were no additional matters.
- 2876 Next meeting: Wednesday 16 November 2022 (CA105/6, Catalyst, Leek Rd)