

THE MANCHESTER METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY

BOARD OF GOVERNORS

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 5 APRIL 2019

Present: Ms Vanda Murray
Ms Amie Atkinson
Dr Darren Dancey
Mrs Janet Dawson
Mr Simon Duffy
Ms Lucy Follon
Mr Carlo Frondaroli
Mr Mohammad Habeebullah
Mr Norman Harrison
Professor Donna Lee
Ms Penny Macbeth
Mr Mike Perls
Professor Malcolm Press
Mr Miles Rothbury
Ms Karen Varty

In attendance: Mr Andrew Hewett (Director of Finance)
Professor Karen Moore (Chief Operating Officer)
Mrs Marie Morrissey (Head of Governance and Secretariat)
Dr Justine Daniels (Director of Research and Knowledge Exchange) for minutes 1793 - 1794
Professor Richard Greene (Pro-Vice-Chancellor Research and Knowledge Exchange) to minute 1794
Professor Christine Horrocks (Faculty Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Cheshire) for minute 1795
Professor Helen Laville (Pro-Vice-Chancellor Education) for minutes 1795 - 1796
Dr Jess Edwards (Head of English) for minute 1797

1790 APOLOGIES AND WELCOME

Apologies for absence were received from Mr Russell Andrews, Ms Evelyn Asante-Mensah, Dr David Birch, Mr Calum Mercer, Mr Mark St John Qualter, Mr Neil Thompson and Mr John Varney

The following new Governors were welcomed to their first meeting of the Board:

- Dr Darren Dancey
- Mr Simon Duffy
- Mr Carlo Frondaroli
- Professor Donna Lee
- Ms Karen Varty

1791 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Board members were invited to declare any possible conflicts of interest on any matters being discussed at today's meeting. A declaration was received from Ms Penny Macbeth in relation to the item on strategic projects.

1792 VICE-CHANCELLOR'S BRIEFING

The Vice-Chancellor presented an update (BG/19/11) on University and sector developments and the current challenging and changing external environment, which included:

- Brexit.
- The post-18 fees and funding review.
- Increased costs due to pension changes.
- Societal issues including mental health and wellbeing.
- Continuing media focus on universities, e.g. grade inflation and unconditional offers.

There was discussion about the use of unconditional offers and the Board was assured that Manchester Metropolitan University only made a small proportion of unconditional offers to very high performing students.

It was acknowledged that the sector needed to be more transparent and better at conveying the positive contribution that universities made to society.

Attention was drawn to a recent Office for Students' publication on the financial sustainability of the sector. Although the report highlighted that the sector was in reasonable financial health, there were variations between individual providers and there were concerns about possible optimistic student recruitment forecasts provided by providers.

It was concluded that, despite the external challenges, the University was in a relatively good position and the current strategy of focusing on areas of strength, improving quality and working at pace continued to be appropriate.

RESOLVED

that the report be received.

1793 RESEARCH AND KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE STRATEGY UPDATE

The Pro-Vice-Chancellor Research and Knowledge Exchange (RKE) and the Director of RKE presented an update (BG/19/12) on progress made with the University's RKE Strategy that was approved by the Board in February 2017.

It was noted that high quality and impactful research continued to be a priority for the University. Over the past year, there had been a continued focus on areas of strength and good progress had been made, particularly in the following areas:

- RKE infrastructure
- Research quality
- The number and proportion of staff producing high quality outputs
- The number and value of applications
- Research income
- Research cost recovery

The Board welcomed the progress that was being made and the work that was taking place to improve efficiency. It was noted that, although there was currently cross-subsidy between teaching and research, work was taking place to improve income generation and research impact. This would in turn allow the University to become more sustainable by reducing its reliance on internal income to support research. It was recognised that research-informed teaching contributed to student satisfaction and student success; and an enhanced research reputation could support the achievement of the University's Education and Internationalisation Strategies.

RESOLVED

that the report be received.

1794 RESEARCH EXCELLENCE FRAMEWORK 2021

The Pro-Vice-Chancellor RKE presented an update (BG/19/13) on the University's preparations for the Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2021.

The Board was reminded of the University's performance in the last REF when it was ranked 66th out of 128 institutions. It was noted that the target for the REF 2021 was to be in the top 50. Such an achievement would significantly enhance the University's reputational standing, which would support the achievement of its objectives of increasing international student recruitment and improving its global reputation. Work was currently taking place to develop the University's Code of Practice, which would inform the REF submission. The Board encouraged the University to be ambitious and to continue to focus on areas of strength.

RESOLVED

that the report be received.

1795 OVERVIEW OF STRATEGIC PROJECTS

The Chief Operating Officer presented an overview (BG/19/14) of the University's key strategic projects. Updates were then presented on specific projects as follows:

1795.1 Cheshire Transition Project

The Faculty Pro-Vice-Chancellor Cheshire presented an update on the Cheshire Transition Project. It was noted that the project to

withdraw from the campus was now in its final phases. The Board was pleased to note that, despite the challenges, the project had been successfully managed and overall disruption had been kept to a minimum. A key success of the project had been the positive environment created for students and staff during teach-out, with high levels of student satisfaction and positive student outcomes. It was agreed that strong partnership working with students and the Students' Union had contributed to the success of the project.

1795.2 School of Digital Arts (SODA)

The Deputy Faculty Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Arts and Humanities, presented an update on the School of Digital Arts strategic project. A final business case for the new building for the School would be submitted to the June 2019 meeting of the Board. Subject to Board approval, construction would commence in November 2019 with an anticipated opening date of September 2021. The new School would offer innovative new curriculum in digital arts and would help to support the growing creative digital sector in Manchester and address the recognised skills gap in these industries.

The Board welcomed the progress being made with this exciting project, which would be a cross disciplinary School. In particular, the collaborative working with industry partners was welcomed and considered to be crucial to the success of the new School.

1795.3 CONFIDENTIAL MINUTE

Not for publication in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act.

1795.4 Student Centred Curriculum

The Pro-Vice-Chancellor Education presented an update on the Student Centred Curriculum project, which was changing the way in which the University delivered its undergraduate curriculum, developing a more flexible student focused approach. The project aimed to improve student satisfaction, student progression and graduate outcomes. This project was welcomed by the Board, particularly its focus on employability. It was noted that, although the project was currently supporting a small number of students, it had the potential to be rolled out to a greater number of students across the University.

1795.5 Conclusion

It was concluded that the University's strategic projects were helping to transform the University; they were considered to be innovative, building on areas of strength; and would support the achievement of strategic ambitions. It was also noted that partnership working would play an important role in the success of these projects and ultimately to the sustainability of the University.

RESOLVED

that the report be received.

1796 PROPOSED APPROACH TO ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION PLAN 2020/21

The Pro-Vice-Chancellor Education presented a report (BG/19/15) outlining a proposed approach to the development of the 2020/21 Access and Participation Plan, which would set out the support to be provided to new undergraduate students from 2020/21 to 2024/25.

An overview was given of the key points within the Office for Students guidance and the main areas of work to be undertaken to prepare the plan. It was noted that the targets in the plan needed to be outcome focused and needed to relate to areas where the University faced the greatest challenge. The Board was pleased to note that work was already taking place to make improvements in poorer performing areas. The plan would be submitted to the next meeting of the Board in June 2019 prior to submission to the Office for Students by 1 July 2019.

RESOLVED

that the proposed approach to the development of the 2020/21 Access and Participation Plan be approved.

1797 MANCHESTER CITY OF LITERATURE

The Head of English presented an update (BG/19/16) on the University's involvement in the UNESCO Manchester City of Literature designation as part of the global Creative Cities network.

In addition, a proposal was presented for the University's involvement in a new independent charitable body in partnership with the University of Manchester and Manchester City Council. It was noted that a consultation on governance for Manchester City of Literature had recommended the establishment of an independent charitable body, sustained for its first three years by contributions from the three commissioning partners. Articles of Association had been prepared with input from legal teams from the three institutions. Fundraising would be a key priority for the charity with the aim of becoming independently sustainable after the first three years of operation.

RESOLVED

that the University's involvement as a partner in establishing a new independent charitable body related to the Manchester City of Literature be approved.

1798 BOARD MEMBERSHIP

The Chief Operating Officer presented a report (BG/19/17) outlining proposals relating to Board membership.

RESOLVED

that the following be approved:

- (i) The reappointment of Mark St John Qualter as an Independent Governor for a three-year term of office from 01.08.19 to 31.07.22.
- (ii) The appointment of Anna Welsh, new Students' Union President from 1 July 2019, as a student member of the Board from 1 July 2019 to 30 June 2020.
- (iii) The reappointment of Lucy Follon, Education Officer, as a student member of the Board from 1 July 2019 to 30 June 2020.

1799 MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING HELD ON 8 FEBRUARY 2019

RESOLVED

that the minutes of the Board meeting held on 8 February 2019 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

1800 ACTIONS ARISING FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING

A report (BG/19/18) was submitted setting out actions to be taken following the meeting of the Board held on 8 February 2019 and progress made with regard to those actions.

RESOLVED

that the report be received.

1801 ACTION TAKEN BY THE CHAIR

A report (BG/19/19) was submitted outlining actions that the Chair had taken on behalf of the Board in accordance with Article 6.2 of the Articles of Government.

RESOLVED

that the report be received.

1802 ACADEMIC BOARD REPORT

A report (BG/19/20) was submitted providing an update on business conducted by the Academic Board at its meeting on 13 March 2019.

RESOLVED

that the report be received.

1803 RISK MANAGEMENT UPDATE

A report (BG/19/21) was submitted by the Chief Operating Officer providing an update on risk management. There was discussion about the University's assessment of the risk relating to information security. It was noted that the University had invested in this area to make improvements and now had strong mitigating actions in place.

RESOLVED

that the report be received.

1804 COMMITTEE REPORTS

The following Committee reports were submitted for information:

- Audit Committee Meeting – 1 March 2019 (BG/19/22)
- Finance and Resources Committee Meeting – 6 March 2019 (BG/19/23)
- Nominations and Governance Committee Meeting – 8 February 2019 (BG/19/24)

In addition, the Chair of the Board updated the Board on feedback received in advance of the meeting from the Chair of the Audit Committee.

RESOLVED

that the reports be received.

1805 FEEDBACK FROM CUC MEETING

The Deputy Chair updated the Board on the speech given by the University's Chancellor, Lord Mandelson, at the CUC meeting held on 4 April 2019.

Signature of Chair _____

Date _____