

Board of Governors

Minutes of the One hundred and thirty third meeting of the Board of Governors, held on Thursday, 30 September 2021 at 5.00 pm in Teams

Present:

Ms Kim Carr (Deputy Chair)
Ms Dawinder Bansal
Mr Dean Cullis, Independent Governor
Ms Julie Cunningham, Independent Governor
Mr Alan Edwards, Independent Governor
Ms Donna Leeding, Independent Governor
Mr Jim Oatridge, Independent Governor
Ms Angela Spence, Independent Governor
Dr Ada Adeghe, Academic Board Governor
Kimberly Forlini-Softley, Alumni Database Manager, External Engagement
Ms Tayabah Mahmood, Student Governor
Prof. Geoff Layer, Vice-Chancellor

In attendance:

Ms Samantha Waters, University Secretary
Mr Nirmal Borkhataria
Prof. Julia Clarke, DVC Student
Mr Tim Steele, Pro Vice Chancellor International
Mrs Emma Bull, University Registrar
Ms Katharine Clough, Director for External Relations
Ms Diane Cook, Head of Corporate Governance

Apologies:

Dr Buki Adeyemo, Independent Governor
Mr Chris Handy
Mr Ninder Johal, Independent Governor
Elaine Siew
Mr Amrit Singh, Independent Governor
Mr Oluwatobi Falana, Student Governor

BG/21/1 Membership, apologies and declarations of interest

- i. Ms Carr opened the meeting and took time to acknowledge the hard work and commitment across the University during the last academic year.

BG/21/1A Ratification of Independent Governors, Co-opted and Staff Governors

- i. It was noted that email resolution for the appointment of the following Independent Governors and Co-opted Members had been unanimously agreed on Wednesday 25 August 2021, regarding the following:

Independent Governors
Chris Handy
Elaine Siew
Dean Cullis

Amrit Singh
Dawinder Bansal
Peter Price

Co-opted Members
Lisa Meyer
David Ferriday

- i. The term of office for the Independent Governors and Co-opted Members had been agreed from the 1 September 2021, with the exception of Peter Price whose term will be from 1 October. This was due to Julie Cunningham, Independent Governor resigning on 30 September 2021. Their first term of office would finish on 31 July 2024.
- ii. An email approval and recommendation from Governance & Nominations Committee to the Board of Governors for the following Academic and Professional Services Governors was taken:

Ada Adeghe – Academic Governor
Kimberly Forlini-Softley – Professional Services Governor

- iii. The Board of Governors approved the Ada Adeghe as Academic Governors and Kimberly Forlini-Softley as the Professional Service Governor at the Board meeting on the 30 September 2021

BG/21/1A Chairs Action - Approval of Independent Governors Term of Office

- i. The Board was asked to approve the following Chair's action taken by Kim Carr, Interim Chair of the Board of Governors

Date: August 2021

Register number: 28

Action: To approve, the second term for the following Independent Governors

Mr Jim Oatridge, second term of office commenced on 1 August 2021 to 31 July 2024.

Dr Buki Adeyemo, second term of office commenced on 1 August 2021 to 31 July 2024

Action: to approve, the third term for the following Independent Governor Mr Ninder Johal, third term of office commenced on 1 August 2021 to 31 July 2024

BG/21/1B Committee Membership 2021-22

- i. The board discussed the membership of the committee and the following points were raised.
 - a. New Governors were to be contacted to inform them of the committee membership.
 - b. Composition of the Remuneration Committee was to be re-visited as the Chair and two Deputy Chairs sat on this Committee. In addition, a Student Governor should be included on the membership for transparency.

- c. It was noted that all duties that Governors undertook outside of the Board of Governors and its committees had been taken into consideration to ensure availability and time commitment.

BG/21/2 Minutes and Matters arising

- i. The minutes of the Board of Governor meeting on 23 July 2021, were agreed as a true record.
- ii. Items from the action checklist were on the agenda.
- iii. The following points were raised:
 - a. Remediation of fire doors was taking place where possible as opposed to fitting new fire doors which would incur savings. However, where replacement fire doors were required these were being undertaken whilst in-situ. It was noted this was the recommendation of the Fire Safety Consultant in collaboration with fire safety officers.
 - b. It was confirmed that Fire Safety work was being undertaken and a comprehensive report would be presented to Finance & Investment Committee.
 - c. Clarity around student numbers was requested.

Part A: Priority Items for Discussion

BG/21/3 VC Update

- i. The Vice Chancellor presented his paper which provided an update on work undertaken and the issues that had arisen since the date of the last regular board meeting on 23 July 2021.
- ii. The following points were raised:
 - a. Change in the Government reshuffle could impact the comprehensive spend review.
 - b. There was new admissions system.
 - c. Student loan payback period where it could be written off had increased from 30 years to 40 years.
 - d. Reference was made to the Levelling Up White Paper.
 - e. The University was promoting wearing of face covers although not compulsory. Ventilation and how areas were being used for groups of people was being investigated.
 - f. A new contractor had been appointed as the supplier for e-books for students. It was noted that there were no restrictions on the number of students who could access the books. As this was a year's trial the service/contract would be evaluated as at present there was no cost incurred by the student.
 - g. NBI was ahead of schedule and risks had been mitigated.
 - h. School of Pharmacy and Screen School were behind on schedule due to material supply issues.
 - i. There was a discussion regarding the work being undertaken by Birmingham City University and the research taking place regarding BAME communities and if this information was available. It was noted that this research would allow for quantitative evidence to be produced and shared.

- j. The Turing Scheme Award had been granted funding for over 100 global exchanges from September 2021, which included University study and industry work placement. A discussion took place regarding skills shortages and if the grant would be used for these areas. It was noted that the scheme was only available on a yearly basis and was limited due to visas. However, courses within the University had been given the opportunity to bid for this money internally.
 - k. Health and Wellbeing had now moved slightly away from the issues of shielding to issues around mental health and anxiety regarding returning to campus and it was necessary to ensure there were coping mechanisms in place.
- iii. The Board noted the updates contained within the report.

BG/21/4 Student Recruitment Update Semester One, September 2021

- i. The PVC for Global Opportunities presented his report and the following points were raised and discussed.
 - a. A level results which had seen a huge increase in students receiving high grades had impacted on the University and other similar institutions. The students had greater choice to apply to institutions that perhaps would not have been accessible to them traditionally. A discussion took place as to how this would affect the students and what support they would have following the grade inflation. It was noted across the sector students would need support but the Board was assured that the University already had support mechanisms in place. It was noted that a significant proportion of mature students would not necessarily be impacted by the grade inflation but they would still need support with their learning.
 - b. We are actively monitoring progress against targets.
 - c. Distance Learning had seen a new suite of courses launched in 2021 and had continued to grow. Our courses so far have seen significant numbers following the successful accreditation from the professional body.
 - d. The University was clearly focussed on January 2022 enrolment and September 2023.
 - e. A discussion took place regarding the term 'firm accepts' and what this meant. The 'applicant' (potential student) had an option to either accept the University's offer or to reject it. The onus was on the University to convert the acceptance to full enrolment of the student on the course they wished to study. A discussion took place around 'conversion'.
 - f. The viability of distance learning was discussed regarding benchmarking, and it was noted that this was outlined in the original business plan.

BG/21/5 Exempt from Publication

BG/21/6 Exempt form Publication

**BG/21/7 Chairs Update from Finance & Investment Committee 16
September 2021**

- i. The following points were raised:
 - a. A Finance workshop would be arranged in November for all Governors to attend.
 - b. Further discussion was exempt from publication.

BG/21/8 Exempt from Publication

Part B: Items for Approval

Part C: Items for Receipt/ For Information

BG/21/9 Independent Governors Fit & Proper Person

- i. The University Secretary presented the report and the following points were raised:
 - a. All Governors had completed Fit and Proper Persons form and their declarations of interest.
 - b. A review against Company's House and disqualified Directors had been undertaken and it was confirmed that none of the Governors were listed.
 - c. In addition, the solvency site on www.gov.uk was also used and again none of the Governors were listed
 - d. This ensured that the OfS regulations were adhered to and assurance could be given for all Board members to serve on the Board of Governors.

BG/21/10 VC Recruitment Update

- i. It was noted that the Search Committee had interviewed 4 selected recruitment agencies and had selected one to run VC recruitment process.

BG/21/11 Appointment of Chair of the Board of Governors

- i. This item was a closed item. The Executive Team left for this discussion.

BG/21/12 Apprenticeship Review

- i. This item was deferred.

BG/21/13 Any Other Business

The meeting closed at 8:40pm

The next Board of Governors meeting will be held on 24 November 2021