

Board of Governors

Minutes of the eighty-third meeting of the Board of Governors, held on Thursday 29 March 2012 at 6:00 pm in the Council Room, Wulfruna Street, Wolverhampton.

Present:

Mr M Elliott (Chair)	Professor G Layer
Dr J Johnson	Ms K Gee
Dr B Conway	Mr K Harris
Mr J Sharp	Cllr K Sahota
Dr J Bergin	Mr S Walford
Ms C Burgher	Mr J Pymm (from item 1225 onwards)

In attendance:

Mr A W Lee, Clerk to the Board of Governors
Professor A Holmes, Deputy Vice-Chancellor Academic
Prof Sir Geoff Hampton, Deputy Vice-Chancellor
Ms J C Nelson, Pro-Vice Chancellor Student Affairs
Mrs H Lloyd Wildman, Pro-Vice Chancellor and Director of Corporate Services
Mr G Sproston, Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Director of Finance

Administrator:

Miss Gemma Towns, Strategy & Governance Co-ordinator

1220 Welcome and Apologies

Dr John Bergin was welcomed to his first meeting.

Apologies were received from Mrs Ann Kimbley, Mr Ian Hyde, Professor Martin Chambers, Ms Lynette Cutting, Professor Ian Oakes, Mr Stewart Towe and Mr Andy Holding.

1221 Minutes of meeting held on 24th November 2011

Resolved that the minutes of the eighty-second meeting of the Board of Governors held on 24th November 2011 be approved as true record.

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

1222 Membership and Attendance

Resolved that Ms Kathy Gee be reappointed as an Independent member and Deputy Chair for a three year term.

1223 Vice Chancellor's Report

The Vice Chancellor provided additional information to his report.

The Vice Chancellor advised that uncertainty continued in the Higher Education sector. He identified that:

- a. there would be more teacher training places available in the University in 2012/13 than in 2011/12 which was a remarkable achievement
- b. demand for places for 2012/13 remained buoyant and applications were 3.5% above the same position last year
- c. there were significant improvements in some subject areas with a decline in demand in others. In particular, the Business School had received a 25% increase in applications whilst the national position was a 0% increase.

Mr Sharp enquired if there was sufficient teaching accommodation to cope with this demand, the Vice Chancellor confirmed there was sufficient space but further consideration to this issue was required. Cllr Sahota asked how the tuition rate of £8.5k fared in comparison to other institutions. The Vice Chancellor advised that on face value, the fee was higher than regional competitors but this did not appear to have deterred potential applicants and the fee discounts had proven to be a popular aspect of the Wolverhampton offer. Mr Harris confirmed this was a good attraction for potential students, along with the national scholarship scheme. Mr Harris reported that feedback from potential students indicated the fee level was not regarded as onerous. Ms Nelson confirmed that with the £1k discount, the University fee was £7.5k which enabled the University to bid for extra numbers. Ms Burgher noted that a QA Business School had just opened in Birmingham with a fee of circa £6,950 and suggested this new local competitor was also considered.

The Vice Chancellor confirmed a lot of work had been undertaken on the strategic plan and thanked the Governors who had provided advice and guidance for the sub-strategies and the enabling strategies.

Ms Nelson reported that HESA had published its annual student Performance Indicators. These included widening participation indicators (where the University remained significantly above its benchmark and the sector average), non-continuation rates (where the University's performance had improved significantly and was now better than benchmark and the sector average), and projected completion rates (which had also improved significantly for the University). Ms Nelson noted that the University's own KPI on student retention drew on this data, and a more detailed report would therefore be provided to the next meeting.

Cllr Sahota asked if anyone monitored the number of BME students and employees within the University. The Vice Chancellor advised a recent report showing job families across the University had highlighted certain issues regarding the ethnic profile for job families. The progression of BME students was also discussed. Mr Harris advised the Students' Union had authored two papers regarding widening participation which he was happy to share with Governors.

1224 Students' Union Report

Mr Harris highlighted there had been a number of successes within the Students' Union over the last few months. There had been double the number of votes cast in the recent elections. The electronic voting had been improved to make it easier for students to vote. The Students' Union had invested in touch screen technology so students were able to vote using their ID card. This also provided the Students' Union with voter demographic statistics. This had revealed that more first year students had engaged, which was in contrast to the traditionally lower turn out for this group. From this data the Students' Union will be able to shape their election campaigns in future years.

Mr Harris outlined successful campaigns had been run for example, regarding green issues. The Students' Union had also successfully negotiated for the Harrison Learning Centre to be open over Easter and would be adjusting their own opening times accordingly. The Students' Union were also considering opening a half day on Saturdays for drop in sessions and were also considering using virtual assistants on their website, to facilitate more engagement with students.

Mr Harris also reported the Students' Union had assisted in boosting the number of completed NSS surveys. Successful events had been held at Walsall and City campuses to encourage the completion of the surveys and explain their importance to students.

Mr Harris advised a budget review had been held and their finances were healthy. Due to the budget review an extra £15k had been re-allocated to a new student society and to provide assistance towards the NUS Olympics "Be a Champion" events.

Mr Harris stated that the Students' Union had evolved over the last few years to focus on enhancing the student experience. He explained the refurbishment at City campus in the Ambika Paul Centre had made a big impact on this. The new space at Walsall campus had also been successful. At that time, there were thirty three student staff and one graduate intern would also be joining the team.

Dr Johnson enquired about the Investors in People award; Mr Harris confirmed they had received the bronze level Investors in People award and would be working towards the silver award with a view to progressing to the gold award.

1225 Key Performance Indicators and Strategic Plan Update

Mrs Lloyd Wildman advised there had been a revision to the deadlines for the strategic plan. Directors and leads had requested more time to look at the school strategies so the deadline for the enabling strategies had been put back from April 2012 to July 2012.

The Vice Chancellor advised there was to be a proposed investment on research. Mr Sharp asked if a provision had been made for the investment. The Vice Chancellor confirmed that such a provision would need to be made from the University's reserves. Dr Walford was of the view it was important to be affirmative about the focus on research as this marked a different educational character to ten years ago. Dr Walford felt the Board should be clear that an investment in research was something the University should be undertaking.

In respect of enterprise and employability, Ms Gee asked if there would be enough internship places if every student accepted the offer. The Vice Chancellor advised every effort would be made to find an internship for those who requested a place and the University were also looking to offer a number of internships in-house.

Ms Nelson outlined the change in status of KPI 1, student recruitment. This had previously been a status 2 but it was recommended this was downgraded to a status 3 given the potential holdback from HEFCE regarding student numbers under the University Modernisation Fund.

Resolved that the status of Key Performance Indicator 1, student recruitment, be approved.

The Board agreed they were happy with the new style presentation of KPIs. They advised if there was a change in KPI status, they would like to be provided with information in the KPI report outlining the reason for the change.

1226 Student Numbers

Ms Nelson presented a report on student number related issues.

For 2012 entry, the number of 'core' full-time undergraduate places allocated to the University had been reduced from 4000 to 3250. This had been supplemented by the award of 250 'margin' places following a successful bid. Across the sector there had been a transfer of numbers from universities to FE colleges as a result of the 'core and margin' process.

In relation to UCAS, where applications remained buoyant, the emphasis was now on converting University offers into applicant acceptances. Eight graduate interns had been appointed to support this work, and were contacting applicants personally. To attract applicants with AAB (or the equivalent), which are outside the Student Number Control, the University was offering a Distinction Scholarship. HEFCE's list of 'equivalent' qualifications included three distinctions in BTEC Nationals. This was an important market for the University as these candidates are less likely to be targeted by Russell Group universities.

On tuition fees, she drew attention to the proposed change to the postgraduate tuition fee, which followed confirmation that there would be some continuing HEFCE funding for this category of student, and the gradual emergence of competitor information. The Chair confirmed that Finance and General Purposes Committee had delegated authority to the Vice-Chancellor to make a final decision on this.

It was noted that the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Sir Geoff Hampton and Jane Nelson would be meeting College Principals shortly to continue discussion about future collaborative work in the light of recent developments.

In response to student number management issues reviewed at the last meeting of the Board, Ms Nelson confirmed that web based 'real time' applicant and enrolment monitoring data was now provided to Deans, and that monthly snapshots had also been developed to build up comparative data.

1227 Calendar of Meetings 2012/13

It was agreed the Governors would be contacted with confirmation of dates of the meeting but they were otherwise approved. Governors would also be asked if they would prefer meetings to be held during the day rather than in the evening.

1228 Academic Board

Dr Conway introduced the report from Academic Board. There were no matters arising from this report.

Resolved that the report from Academic Board be received.

1229 Reports from the Governor Committees

(a) Finance and General Purposes Committee 19th January 2012

The Chair indicated that the Committee had reviewed a number of the key issues covered on the main Governing Body agenda, including student recruitment and numbers and was in the process of considering the Investment Strategy of the University and a number of estates matters

Resolved that the report on the meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee, held on 19th January 2012 be received.

(b) Finance and General Purposes Committee 15th March 2012

Resolved that the report on the meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee, held on 15th March 2012 be received.

(c) Audit Committee 1st March 2012

On behalf of Audit Committee, Mr Sharp expressed his thanks to Estates and Facilities staff who assisted with the evacuation of students from Victoria Halls following the fire at Carvers. Mr Sharp advised PwC were going to give access to a portal so the Audit Committee Chair could see how actions were being dealt with in between meetings.

Resolved that the report on the meeting of the Audit Committee, held on 1st March 2012 be received.

(d) Wholly Owned Companies Meeting 15th March 2012

The Vice Chancellor advised that business was a little quieter due to the economy and there had been a decline in revenue. Dr Walford asked if there were any liabilities on the University if one of the wholly owned companies went into receivership; The Clerk confirmed that it was a requirement for external audit that the University would support any company in such a position. The Clerk confirmed this was not on the University's risk register. The Chair stated the risk was carried by the University on a large portfolio. The Clerk added that insurance was in place.

Resolved that the report on the meeting of the Finance and General Purposes Committee, held on 15th March 2012 be received.

1230 Sealing Record

The Board confirmed the affixing of the Common Seal of the Corporation to the documents set out against items 366 of the Sealing Record.

The Clerk advised the following seals had been affixed since the report was prepared:

Seal Number	Details
367	Contract relating to the purchase of property
368	Agreement relating to the supply and installation of CHP generator at City Campus
369	TR1 Land Registry transfer document
370	Legal charge relating to land at Compton Campus
371	Overage agreement relating to land at Compton Campus
372	TP1 Land Registry transfer deed WM992227 to Redrow Homes Ltd
373	Overage agreement relating to land at Compton Campus
374	Overage agreement relating to former teaching space at Compton Campus

The Board confirmed the affixing of the Common Seal of the Corporation to the documents set out against items 367 to 374 of the Sealing Record.

1231 Any Other Business

- (i) Cllr Sahota confirmed that he would not have any involvement with the Compton Park Campus re-development due to his involvement with Building Schools for the Future.
- (ii) Mr Sharp enquired what contingency plans were in place should a fuel strike take place. Mrs Lloyd Wildman agreed to look into this (**action: HLW**).
- (iii) The Clerk reported that the University had won a contract from the Arts Council valued at approximately £2.4m to deliver in BCCSIP/Educational Central, programmes of arts awareness for young people in the region, between now and 2015.
- (iv) The Board noted that the contract had been accepted and signed off by the Vice Chancellor.
- (v) The Chair encouraged Governors to complete the survey regarding electronic papers.
- (vi) The Chair also thanked Mr Sproston for his enormous contribution over the years and congratulated him on his retirement. The Chair noted that the institution was

financially healthy and robust and expressed thanks in no small part to the wisdom, guidance and prudence of Mr Sproston.

Meeting closed 7:50pm.