

## **Board of Governors and CMT Away Day**

Minutes of the Board of Governors and CMT Away Day, held on Friday 26<sup>th</sup> September 2014 at 9:15am in Room MC301, City Campus, Wolverhampton.

### **Present:**

Mr Michael Elliott, Chair  
Ms Kathy Gee, Deputy Chair  
Professor Geoff Layer, Vice-Chancellor  
Ms Kate Copestake, Independent Governor  
Rev Eddie Wynn, Non-Teaching Staff Representative Governor  
Cllr Kuldip Sahota, Co-opted Governor  
Dr Josh Johnson, Independent Governor  
Dr Aidan Byrne, Teaching Staff Representative Governor  
Dr Simon Walford, Deputy Chair  
Ms Zoe Harrison, Student Governor  
Mr Ben Reid, Independent Governor  
Mr Mike Priddy, Independent Governor  
Professor Martin Chambers, Independent Governor

### **In attendance:**

Mrs Helen Lloyd Wildman, University Registrar and Secretary  
Professor Ian Oakes, Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research and Enterprise  
Dr Anthea Gregory, Deputy Vice-Chancellor Academic  
Ms Jackie Dunne, Deputy Vice-Chancellor Access and Lifelong Learning  
Mr Andy Holding, Finance Director  
Mr Ivor Lawrence, Interim Director of Marketing & Communications  
Professor John Darling, Dean of Research  
Mr Jon Elsmore, Dean of Students  
Ms Steph Harris, Director of HR  
Professor Linda Lang, Dean of Faculty of Education, Health & Wellbeing  
Mr Stephen Cameron, Head of Planning  
Dr Alexandra Hopkins, Associate Dean  
Professor Ndy Ekere, Dean of Faculty of Science and Engineering  
Ms Jo Gittens, Director of International  
Dr Emma Wedge, Policy Advisor to the Vice-Chancellor  
Mrs Ruby Hart, Executive Officer  
Ms Yvonne Hawkins, HEFCE - morning session only  
Ms Patricia Fouracres, Assistant Director, Directorate of Academic Support  
Mr Paul Davis, Assistant Director, Capital Projects

### **Apologies:**

Ms Carole Burgher, Independent Governor  
Ms Sukhbir Garcha, Co-opted Governor (Student)  
Professor Gill Nicholls, Co-opted Governor

Ms Paula Clark, Independent Governor  
Ms Fiona Parsons, Director of Academic Support  
Mr Marc Fleetham, Director of Business Solutions  
Ms Liz Dix, Deputy Director of Education Central  
Mr Paul Travill, Director of Corporate Administration

**Administrator:**

Miss Gemma Towns, Assistant Clerk to the Board

**1 Welcome**

Mr Elliott welcomed all attendees to the Away Day. Mr Elliott advised CMT members that the Board had elected Dr Simon Walford as the new Chair of the Board (effective from 21<sup>st</sup> November 2014) at their Board meeting earlier that morning.

**2 Strategic Plan – Progress**

Professor Layer delivered a presentation outlining the progress of the strategic plan to date and the goals of the University.

Dr Byrne asked what the “digital campus” strategy was; Professor Layer explained this strategy in terms of VLE, communication, accessibility and how it was used. Such a strategy and investment plan was to be discussed later in the year.

Dr Walford asked how the University’s role could be explained to other Universities particularly as it did not appear in league tables. Professor Layer advised the University provided growth for the local economy, for example investing and delivering in STEM subjects.

Mr Priddy suggested it may be possible to quantify the progress made by students using the input and output tariff. Dr Byrne asked why some graduates did not immediately find employment within six months of graduation; Professor Layer explained that some subject areas have a higher employability rate than others. Dr Byrne asked what proportion of graduates stayed within the West Midlands region; it was thought most stayed as around 80% of students came from within 25 mile radius of Wolverhampton.

**3 Trends and Developments, a presentation from Yvonne Hawkins, HEFCE**

Ms Hawkins delivered her presentation which looked at the challenges and opportunities for the sector along with recent developments.

The meeting discussed the possible implications if the second round of cuts to funding were more stringent than the first round and what implications this could have on universities. Mr Holding asked to what extent the Government were aware of universities investments in their campuses and the benefits this brought to the local economy and the region. Ms Hawkins advised that the Government understood that whilst the deficit was being reduced, there needed to be a plan for growth and the Government saw universities as an important part of this.

The meeting discussed the impact of the higher fees on the sector. Ms Hawkins stated that higher level skills were important to all political parties and HEIs had a role to play with the 50% of the population who did not go to university, by way of skills development. The meeting also considered the “cold spots” map and how such issues could be addressed.

The removal of student numbers control was discussed. The need for growth to protect against a possible reintroduction of such controls at a later date was discussed.

The role of alternative providers in the sector was discussed. Ms Hawkins advised that HEFCE had no statutory powers over alternative providers. The Department for Business, Innovation & Skills had asked HEFCE to assist them by undertaking checks on courses and financial sustainability of alternative providers but HEFCE acknowledged they would be required to further understand alternative providers’ business models. HEFCE were assisting international students attending courses run by alternative providers where their Tier Four licences had been suspended by UKVI. Ms Hawkins advised that due to HEFCE’s lack of statutory powers with regard to such alternative providers, students were only able to rely upon customer protection laws.

The policy opportunities for the sector were discussed. Mr Priddy asked what the role of FE institutions were if universities were targeting skills traditionally the preserve of FE providers. Ms Hawkins was of the view there was room for both FE and HE providers as FE colleges could not provide the high level qualifications that universities could provide. Professor Layer echoed this comment by stating that the local area had one of the highest figures for adults with no academic qualifications, which was a role for FE to target.

The meeting thanked Ms Hawkins for her presentation.

#### **4 “Tipping Points” Presentation**

Professor Layer delivered a presentation on sector changes and the role of the University going forwards.

Mr Reid suggested new ideas should be thoroughly tested before committing to them and suggested consideration should be given to what could change in the sector in future that could make the decisions taken more risky.

The meeting discussed the potential growth in other areas across the UK and to what extent competitors had already established themselves in these areas. Mr Elliott suggested business plans should be fully developed and recalled the former Dudley Campus as an example where reputational damage had been caused when the University withdrew from the area.

Ms Gee asked if the student experience could be consistently applied across an expanded number of distributed learning centres. Professor Layer stated the student experience would be the main focus for any activity but advised future growth activities could include a number of delivery methods such as part time courses, blended learning etc. The meeting discussed the needs of students in traditionally delivered courses on city campus, it was noted many local students returned home after lectures whilst

international students remained on campus. The type of student experience offered at the University in comparison to other providers was discussed. Professor Oakes stated that it was crucial to understand what students want and meet those needs, for example a two year engineering degree had been provided and was tailored for those who were on career progression programmes with their employer.

## **5 Student Experience and Learning and Teaching – Strategic Plan Update**

Dr Gregory delivered a presentation updating the “Learning and Teaching” and the Wolverhampton Offer (Student Experience)” sub-strategies.

The meeting discussed the priority areas. Dr Gregory suggested the Wolverhampton Offer action plan was refreshed as two years had passed since the Strategic Plan had been developed and new actions were required in order to deliver the desired outcomes of the strategy. The Learning and Teaching strategy needed further revision in order to provide clarity around the strategic priorities and desired outcomes. Ms Copestake asked if student input had been captured in the mission and values; Dr Gregory confirmed that the Strategic Plan had been developed in conjunction with the Students’ Union and their input had continued to date. The University’s commitment to the Higher Education Academy was also discussed.

## **6 Employability and Enterprise – Strategic Plan Update**

Professor Oakes delivered a presentation updating the “Employability and Enterprise” sub-strategy.

Dr Johnson asked if good practice was shared across the institution. Professor Oakes confirmed there were Business Advisory Boards in Faculties, and Employability Champions shared best practice. Mr Elsmore advised that the Destination of Leavers of Higher Education (DLHE) report consistently showed that nurses and teachers obtained jobs soon after graduation. However, some other subject areas did not have such a high employability rate and the role of Business Advisory Boards in Faculties was partly to assist in improving employability rates.

Dr Walford asked if student placements in businesses had a positive impact on the business community. Mr Elsmore advised that there were positive impacts across the sector with many businesses providing further student placements as a result of engagement with the University. Dr Wedge stated that areas of the Black Country and Wolverhampton had not necessarily recovered from the recession but despite this student placements and employment remained high.

## **7 Research – Strategic Plan Update**

Professor Oakes delivered a presentation the updating the “Research” sub-strategy. Dr Byrne asked when the results of the PhD bursaries would be announced; this was expected imminently. Cllr Sahota asked what our “headline” research activity was. Professor Oakes stated our world leading brain tumour research was a key example of the high quality work the University undertook. Mr Elliott asked why the number of readers who had been promoted internally was not as high as the number of professors who had been promoted internally. Professor Oakes advised that until 2011 there had

not been an internal procedure for readers. Since 2011 the promotion procedure for professors had been expanded to include readers and it was expected the numbers of readers being internally promoted would increase in future years.

## **8 Internationalisation – Strategic Plan Update**

Ms Gittens delivered an update on the “Internalisation” sub-strategy.

## **9 Discussion on sub-strategies**

Mrs Lloyd Wildman explained that following the Away Day the sub-strategies would be refreshed and returned to the Board later in the academic year. Ms Gee felt that the day had been informative but asked what the role of Governors was in relation to the information received that day. Professor Layer advised the role of the Away Day had been to notify Governors of developments at an early stage to gain input. Mr Elliott felt the style of the day had been informative but felt Governors should contribute to the review of sub-strategies. Dr Walford asked when a new strategic plan would be prepared post 2017. Professor Layer stated the success of the current strategic plan would be reviewed before the five year period expired in 2017 and a new plan would be set for the next five years.

Ms Harrison commented that some actions for the sub-strategies had been marked as green to indicate they had been completed but the results had not been evidenced. Ms Harrison asked when the results could be seen and highlighted that the University should not be complacent when achieving them. Mr Elliott asked, with this view in mind, if some actions should not be marked green at this stage. Dr Gregory suggested although the actions may have been completed, if the desired outcomes had not been achieved then the actions needed to be reviewed, hence the review which will take place in respect of the student experience and learning and teaching strategies. Ms Harrison felt this had been unclear. Mrs Lloyd Wildman suggested that after the plans had been refreshed Level 2 KPIs could be shared with Governors, in addition to the usual Level 1 KPIs, to demonstrate how targets were being met.

## **10 Student Satisfaction**

Dr Hopkins delivered her presentation on student satisfaction.

Professor Layer suggested one area of policy which may contribute to the recent dip in NSS scores could be the issue of space utilisation and the timetabling of teaching rooms. Professor Layer questioned if this could be a contributing factor to NSS scores. Mr Lawrence suggested the areas of administration, interaction of staff and timely feedback tended to dominate the sector in terms of poor NSS scores and questioned if any of these could apply at the University. Ms Harrison suggested it may be prudent to speak to the academic staff who had received 100% feedback to see if there were any areas of best practice which could be shared with other academic colleagues. It was noted that the following year’s NSS score would include for the first time the students who were paying the higher £9k fees. Mr Elsmore advised that the University conducted an internal survey prior to the NSS, this year the internal survey had given an early warning of student satisfaction dipping in the NSS.

Mr Elsmore advised that plans around the digital campus etc were hoped to have a positive impact on the NSS scores for the next year. Dr Pymm highlighted that the NSS statistics at times did not clearly define the issue or help to identify the cause/solution to the problem. It was noted there were contrasting responses in the NSS which did not assist with the analysis of comments, for example some students felt the Learning Centre was well resourced whilst other students felt the opposite.

Mr Elsmore stated that the free-text data of which there were 5,000+ pieces, were very useful in pinpointing exactly what the students were referring to in terms of satisfaction or dissatisfaction.

### **11 QAA Higher Education Review Progress**

Dr Gregory delivered a presentation outlining the update on the QAA Higher Education Review progress. Dr Gregory reported the plans for the Review remained on target and Governors would continue to be updated.

### **12 Final Thoughts**

Professor Layer outlined the progress of the University but advised the issues of student expectations, growth and the outcome of the REF would continue to feature over the coming years. The impact and vision behind the “digital campus” needed further planning and thought.

Mr Elliott commented that the Board of Governors were proud of the University’s achievements but it was important for Governors to play a part in taking the University’s vision forwards. Mr Elliott suggested in future the Away Day featured more discussion and suggested the content of the day was different to the CMT away day which was held earlier in the week. Mr Elliott thanked everyone for their attendance.

Meeting closed: 4:15pm