

UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON HIGHER EDUCATION CORPORATION

BOARD OF GOVERNORS

Minutes of the Board of Governors held on 21 May 2024

Present: John Garwood (Chair), Matthew Almond, Steve Armstrong, Jazz Bhogal, Sophia Bokhari, Fiona Bolton, Amanda Broderick (Vice-Chancellor & President), Ben Buckton (via Teams), Jackie Craissati (via Teams), Trevor Critchlow, Sir Les Ebdon, Amanjit Jhund, Aswin Mathew, Doris Olulode, Sarah Fahy, Bindi Karia (via Teams), and Gavin Poole

In attendance: Hassan Abdalla (Provost), Matt Bellgard (PVC, Impact and Innovation), Jim Benson (University Secretary), Sophie Bowen (Chief Student Officer), Laura Clayton (Director of Strategy, Information and Transformation), Joseph Cooper (Director of People and Culture), Dean Curtis (Deputy Vice-Chancellor), Deborah Lewis (Head of Strategic Engagement), Paul Marshall (PVC, Careers & Enterprise), Vanessa Varvas (Chief Marketing Officer)

Officer: Jane Thomas (Governance Manager)

Apologies: Bibin Bobacham, Regina Everitt and Tommy MacDonnell

23/89 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

89/01 NOTED: that there were no declarations of interest.

23/90 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 20 FEBRUARY 2024 AND 27 MARCH 2024

90/01 NOTED and CONFIRMED: the minutes of the meetings held on 20 February 2024 and 27 March 2024.

23/91 MATTERS ARISING

91/01 RECEIVED: a report from the Governance Manager on matters arising from previous meetings.

92/02 NOTED that:

- a) the report on the progress made with the Students' Union would be presented to the October meeting of the Board of Governors and would report on a whole year's activities.

- b) work was currently being undertaken on the annual report on complaints and it would be presented to the Audit and Risk Committee in June 2024.
- c) the arrangements for a tour of the Connected Campus were in progress.
- d) a progress report on the appointment of the Chancellor would be presented to a meeting of the Board of Governors in Autumn 2024 when there has been significant progress.
- e) in relation to the Stratford new build partner, it was noted that UEL were reengaging with the market and had received strong interest. UEB would be reviewing options, and this would be brought back to the Board at the end of 2024 or beginning of 2025.

23/92 REPORT OF BUSINESS DISCUSSED AT STANDING COMMITTEES

92/01 RECEIVED: a report from the University Secretary on business discussed at standing committees.

92/02 NOTED: that Jackie Craissati's term of office had come to an end in March 2024 and it was proposed that the appointment be renewed for a further three-year term.

92/03 AGREED: to appoint Jackie Craissati for a further three-year term.

23/93 RISK SUMMARY

93/01 RECEIVED: the risk summary.

93/02 NOTED: that the top two risks would be reviewed as they were currently out of date.

23/94 UPDATE BY THE VICE-CHANCELLOR & PRESIDENT

94/01 RECEIVED: a presentation from the Vice-Chancellor & President

94/02 NOTED that:

Scenario Planning

- a) it was recognised that there were a number of external factors which would materially impact on the financial position of the University and consequently this would result in difficulties when trying to plan.
- b) the budget was due to be considered at the Finance and Resources Committee in July 2024. The possibility of planning a deficit budget for 2024/25 was discussed to help the University manage during a period of uncertainty and to provide some time for the transition. This would help to ensure that cuts were not made too fast or in the wrong areas, which could then result in ongoing issues.

- c) after considering various options the Board confirmed that it would agree to a circa 10% income reduction and a £10m planned deficit to allow some transition time.

Health Campus

- d) there was a query regarding the proposed name of the School of Childhood & Social Care. However, it was noted that courses were not marketed using the name of the school. The word “childhood” had been used specifically to position the University’s expertise in early years on a more impactful national and international stage. It was also recognised that this was an area which was increasingly being invested in by the Government and where budgets had not been cut.
- e) it was recognised that the funding was extremely complex. However, a request was made for more information in relation to the financial commitment and the risk involved. It was noted that the work was continuing in this area, and it was hoped that there would be enough information for the Board to make a “go, no go” decision at its July meeting of the Board.

94/03 AGREED:

- a) the direction of travel in relation to setting the budget for 2024/25 with a 10% income reduction and a £10m deficit budget.
- b) to provide additional information regarding the financial commitment and the risk involved in establishing the Health Campus.

23/95 STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 4/4: ANNUAL UPDATE ON IMPACT AND INNOVATION

95/01 RECEIVED and NOTED: a presentation from the Pro Vice-Chancellor, Impact and innovation on the Impact and Innovation Strategy.

23/96 CROSS INSTITUTIONAL PRIORITY 1/4: HEALTH GAIN: WELLBEING, LIVING WITH THE VALUES WE ESPOUSE AND THE ROLE OF CHAPLAINCY

96/01 RECEIVED: a presentation from the newly appointed Chaplaincy Manager, James Grenfell.

96/02 NOTED that:

- a) it had been identified that there was one area in which the University had not engaged, which was the whole area of faith and spirituality. A Chaplaincy Manager had been appointed to bridge this gap.
- b) it was recognised that Chaplaincy was for all faiths, but also for individuals with no faith. It was stressed that the purpose of the Chaplaincy was not

to make the University a religious institution, but to recognise the needs of a diverse student body.

- c) there were a number of areas where the Chaplaincy could be involved including a pre-arrival programme to help individuals to feel welcome and have a sense of belonging, as well as connecting with local faith communities. It was also anticipated that pastoral care could be provided to students by running drop-in sessions or one to one sessions where required.
- d) the Faith and Reflection Centre was being refurbished to be a “home away from home” for students, which was in response to student feedback about feeling homesick.
- e) it was expected that the Chaplaincy would explore the value of community relationships to ensure that the University was working in a joint-up way with the community.
- f) at the University of East London 82% of the students identified with a particular religion as opposed to [40%] at other institutions. This was as a reflection of the level of international students and the local community.

23/97 STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2/4: EDUCATION AND EXPERIENCE: ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION PLAN

97/01 NOTED: that the PVC, Education and Experience had run two sessions on access and participation for members of the Board. It was noted that the drafting of the Access and Participation Plan had started and work was being undertaken to identify where there were gaps and where this should be taken forward.

23/98 FINANCIAL POSITION

98/01 RECEIVED: a report from the Director of Finance on the financial position as at Month 8

98/02 NOTED that:

- a) the forecast for 2023/24 was for a surplus of £2.71m and it was not expected that any of the year end revisions would cause any disturbance to that figure.
- b) the income for Semester B admissions was slightly more favourable due to enrolment being extended longer than anticipated. It was also hoped that there would be some additional income from Semester C.
- c) the cash balance as at the end of March was £57.5m against a Q2 forecast of £61.8m. There was a query as to whether the Board should be concerned at the downward trend in the cash balance. However, it was

noted that there had been a good level of payment from students who were self funding, but there remained a core group of students who were not paying. In addition, it was noted that there had been some impact due to the disturbance in the Indian banking system.

23/99 TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME UPDATE

99/01 RECEIVED: a report from the Deputy Vice-Chancellor & Chief Financial Officer providing an update on the Transformation Projects.

99/02 NOTED that:

- a) the majority of the agreed Estates projects had been delivered, with 11% of the budget yet to be committed and delivered.
- b) the construction of the primary care training trust was due to start at the beginning of June. In addition, the final negotiations in relation to the Art Centre at Stratford Circus were also being undertaken.
- c) it was anticipated that by the end of the financial year all projects would be in construction, with the exception of the land to the west, which would be subject to a more detailed discussion.
- d) the student accommodation element of the construction work at Stratford would be going back out to market to look at ways and means of concluding that activity by the beginning of the 2025 calendar year.
- e) there had been a lack of expenditure in relation to the Digital 1st project, this was mainly due to resourcing. It was not anticipated that this would change in the foreseeable future.
- f) the new expenses system was now live and would be used for 2024/25.

23/100 REPORT OF BUSINESS DISCUSSED AT ACADEMIC BOARD

100/01 RECEIVED and NOTED: the report on business discussed at Academic Board.

23/101 CHAIR'S BUSINESS

101/01 RECEIVED: a report from the University Secretary

101/02 NOTED that:

- a) Chair's action had been taken to appoint four new independent governors.
- b) UCFB and the Global Institute of Sport were splitting. There would be no change in the current arrangements, however, as two companies were separating, this would have to be reported to the OfS as a reportable event.

23/102 UPDATE ON THE GOVERNANCE EFFECTIVENESS REVIEW

102/01 RECEIVED: a report from the University Secretary providing an update on the Governance Effectiveness Review.

102/02 NOTED that:

- a) the actions had been updated since the last Board meeting held in March.
- b) a guidance for presenters had been produced and it was agreed that any comments should be sent to the University Secretary directly.
- c) a proposed training plan for Governors was also included which covered 7 areas of governance and 5 areas of compliance. It was noted that it was not planned to duplicate training where this had been received at a Governor's workplace.

23/103 GOVERNANCE APPOINTMENTS

103/01 RECEIVED: a report from the University Secretary on governance appointments.

103/02 NOTED that:

- a) it was proposed that Sarah Fahy be appointed as the Deputy Chair of the Board, that Amanjit Jhund be appointed as the Chair of the Finance and Resources Committee and that Trevor Critchlow be appointed as the Chair of the Ethics Advisory Committee. The Board agreed to each appointment.
- b) the Chair thanked Steve Armstrong, Bindi Karia and Doris Olulode for their work in Chairing their respective committees.

103/03 AGREED:

- a) to appoint Sarah Fahy as Deputy Chair of the Board with effect from 1 August 2024
- b) to appoint Amanjit Jhund as Chair of the Finance and Resources Committee with effect from 1 August 2024.
- c) to appoint Trevor Critchlow as Chair of the Ethics Advisory Committee with effect from 1 August 2024.

23/104 UPDATE ON SECTOR REGULATION AND GOVERNANCE

104/01 RECEIVED: a report from the University Secretary on sector regulation and governance.

104/02 NOTED that:

- a) there were two issues raised in relation to the OfS Condition of Registration, one in relation to the Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) review of the graduate visa and the other in relation to the Education Select Committee inquiry into international students in English universities.
- b) in relation to the OfS consultation on sexual harassment and misconduct, it was noted that the proposed changes did not differ significantly from their original consultation. It was also noted that they had offered further briefings before the final consultation outcomes were published.
- c) in relation to Freedom of Speech it was noted that the new statutory duties would come into effect from 1 August 2024. The OfS complaints scheme and regulation of the Students' Union would come into effect at the same time.

23/104 SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS FOR 2024/25

104/01 RECEIVED and NOTED: the schedule of meetings for 2024/25.

23/105 SCHEDULE OF BUSINESS

105/01 RECEIVED and NOTED: the schedule of business for 2024/25.

23/106 USE OF THE CORPORATION'S SEAL

106/01 NOTED: that the Corporation's Seal has not been used since the last meeting of the Board.

23/107 TO NOTE THE DATES OF MEETINGS OF THE BOARD FOR 2023/24

107/01 NOTED: that the dates of meetings for 2023/24 were as follows:

9 July 2024