

**CONFIRMED**

**UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON HIGHER EDUCATION CORPORATION**

**BOARD OF GOVERNORS**

**Minutes of the Board of Governors held on Wednesday 27 October 2021 in Room KD.2.22, Knowledge Dock, Docklands**

**Present:** Anulika Ajufo (Chair), Ismail Amla (via Teams), Amanda Broderick (Vice-Chancellor & President), Trevor Critchlow, Adam Doyle, Les Ebdon, Regina Everitt, Bindi Karia, Mottie Kessler (via Teams), Irfana Kottikulam-Aboobacker, Lavanya Rajendran, Gary Stewart (via Teams) and Janette Withey

**In attendance:** Hassan Abdalla (Provost), Bugewa Apampa (Dean of the Office for Institutional Equity), Jim Benson (University Secretary), Verity Brown (PVC Impact and Innovation), Dean Curtis (DVC & Chief Finance Officer), Dalia Dasgupta (HR Director), Paul Marshall (PVC Careers and Enterprise), Ian Pickup (Chief Operating Officer)(via Teams). Vanessa Varvas (Chief Marketing Officer) and Scott Williams (Deputy Chief Marketing Officer)

**Officer:** Jane Thomas (Governance Manager)

**Apologies:** Jackie Craissati, John Garwood, Doris Olulode and Tommy MacDonnell

**21/01 BOARD STRATEGY SESSION**

**01/01 NOTED that:**

- a) the Board had approved further development of a number of proposals at the Board Strategy Session as follows:
- the KPIs for sustainable growth and diversification, education, our future graduates (education & experience) and our future life (impact & innovation).
  - the development at Stratford encompassing residential, health, sport, nursery and policing provision.
  - the Royal Docks Centre for Sustainability-Industry/Education interface with community and Olympic Park connectivity;
  - the Docklands Development for Sports Arena, Apprenticeship Centre and Health Multi-Academy Trust initiative.
- b) the Board also approved the KPIs for our future professionals (careers and enterprise), with the the Graduate Outcome Survey KPI. A request was made for alternatives to be presented to the Board to replace the current target

which better reflected the overall ambition of the university to produce happy, employable, well-rounded graduates with added-value gained through their academic experience with any proposal made to be benchmarked against the sector. This would be presented to a future meeting of the Board in the current academic year.

## **21/02 NOTICE OF INTENTION TO SPEAK TO STARRED ITEMS**

**02/01 NOTED:** there was no notice of intention to speak to starred items.

## **21/03 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

**03/01 NOTED:** there were no declarations of interest.

## **21/04 MEMBERSHIP**

**04/01 RECEIVED:** a report from the Governance Manager on the membership of the Board of Governors.

**04/02 NOTED that:**

- a) a total of four vacancies for membership to the Board of Governors would become available at the end of July 2022. These vacancies would include the Chair, the Senior Independent Governor and the Chair of the Finance and Resources Committee. It was noted that the filling of these vacancies would be overseen by the Governance and Search Committee.
- b) a total of 27 live applications had been received for the role of the Chair of the Board. There was a lack of diversity amongst the candidates and a request was made for the Deputy Chair, as lead on the recruitment of a new Chair, to go back to Harvey Nash to discuss this issue and the need to increase the diversity of the candidates. It was noted that two barriers to applications had been identified when approaching candidates in relation to the time commitment of 6 days a month as well as the lack of remuneration. It was noted that consideration could be given to lowering the time commitment if necessary, but it was not thought appropriate to remunerate the Chair, given that this was exceptional within the sector.
- c) a number of candidates had been interviewed by Harvey Nash and, although they were not suitable for the role of the Chair, there was potential for recruitment to membership of the Board.
- d) at the Board of Governors' meeting held on 7 July 2021, the Board approved the appointment of Jasmeet Gupta as a student governor for 2021/22. However, it was noted that Jasmeet was no longer Education Officer and had lost the positions associated with that role. Irfana Kottikulam-Aboobacker has been nominated in her place and the Board agreed to formally appoint her for membership to the Board for 2020/21.

- e) a number of recommendations were also made in relation to membership of standing committees. It was requested that the Board approve Sir Les Ebdon for membership on the Governance and Search Committee, Reverend Trevor Critchlow for membership on the Ethics Advisory Committee, Tommy MacDonnell and Regina Everitt for membership on the Finance and Resources Committee.

**04/03 AGREED:**

- a) to approve the membership of the Board for 2021/22.
- b) to approve the appointment of Irfana Kottikulam-Aboobacker to the Board.
- c) to approve Sir Les Ebdon for membership on the Governance and Search Committee, Reverend Trevor Critchlow for membership on the Ethics Advisory Committee, Tommy MacDonnell and Regina Everitt for membership on the Finance and Resources Committee.

**21/05 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 7 JULY 2021**

**05/01 RECEIVED and CONFIRMED:** the minutes of the Board of Governors' meeting held on 7 July 2021, noting that Sir Les Ebdon had attended via Teams.

**21/06 MATTERS ARISING**

**06/01 NOTED that:**

- a) the communications in relation to the accounts would be prepared in readiness for the submission of the end of year accounts in December.
- b) an information booklet about the University was distributed in hard copy to members of the Board. A request was made for this information to be made available electronically for distribution on social media sites.
- c) the University Secretary was currently discussing the appropriate cycle of Health and Safety reporting with the Health and Safety Manager
- d) the annual report on student complaints and appeals was currently being compiled and the benchmarking data would be included.
- e) no volunteer from the Board of Governors had come forward for health and safety training. It was noted that a significant number of UEB and UMB had attended the training.
- f) the Governance and Search Committee had not considered the term of office for the current Chancellor, which would be considered once the appointment of the Chair had been completed.
- g) the actions in relation to the Prevent report had been taken into account whilst compiling the report and would be presented to the next meeting of the Board.

**06/02 AGREED:** electronic copy of the information sheet about the University for governors to be made available electronically.

## **21/07 BUSINESS DISCUSSED AT STANDING COMMITTEES**

**07/01 RECEIVED and NOTED:** a report from the Governance Manager on the business discussed at standing committees.

## **21/08 IMPACT & INNOVATION STRATEGY**

**08/01 RECEIVED:** a report and presentation from the PVC Impact and Innovation.

**08/02 NOTED that:**

- a) alternative pathways to professional promotion had been tested and had been received positively and it was recognised that there were clear paths to promotion, not just through research. It was noted that evidence of the work being undertaken by academic staff was captured through PDRs and academic staff were required to reflect on their performance and assess their level through the PDR system.
- b) there was a need to see greater diversity in the classroom and anything that looked like a deficit model had been rejected. It was essential that any questions were not racially biased.

**08/03 AGREED:** the KPIs as presented.

## **21/09 ANNUAL REPORT ON THE RESEARCH INTEGRITY CONCORDAT**

**09/01 NOTED:** that this item had been deferred to the next meeting of the Board.

## **21/10 THE RIX CENTRE – ESTABLISHMENT OF IP SPIN-OUT COMPANY**

**10/01 RECEIVED:** a report from the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Impact & Innovation) on the establishment of a RIX spin-out company, together with a presentation.

**10/02 NOTED that:**

- a) the documentation had been provided to governors in advance of the meeting. It presented the proposal to establish a spin-out company to house the IP and build a partnership with a private company interest. The company interested in the technology was CareTech, who was one of the largest providers of residential care in the UK and was also now with a US subsidiary. It was noted that the IP would be housed in the spin-out company and the right to use that IP would stay within the company. It was anticipated that there might be an interest in acquisition of the new company from which the university would benefit due to their share of ownership.
- b) it was not possible to patent the IP and it was recognised that the product was mainly related to the know-how and approach led by Professor Andy Minnion. There was concern about potential issues at the stage of contract exchange and it was agreed that the PVC Impact and Innovation

should work with Bindi Karia and Gary Stewart who had experience in this area of work

**10/03 AGREED:** the PVC Impact and Innovation to work with Bindi Karia and Gary Stewart before presenting the proposal to the Board for approval.

#### **21/11 NATIONAL STUDENT SATISFACTION SURVEY**

**11/01 RECEIVED:** a report from

**11/02 NOTED that:**

- a) UEL had achieved a score of 72.1% in relation to “overall course satisfaction”, which was a decrease of 5.59% on the previous year. However, it was noted that there had been a 8% decline in sector-wide satisfaction scores. The area of greatest decline for UEL related to learning resources and learning opportunities.
- b) there were variations in satisfaction across the six schools and a correlation between lower satisfaction scores and practical courses had been identified as these were the courses which did not adapt well to online learning. It was noted that there had been a focus on a return to campus from the start of the academic year. Action plans had been developed at course level and module level to address the issues which had been identified. It was noted that the actions from the previous year’s action plan had been enacted, however, it had not been designed taking into account the shift to online learning and teaching. It was recognised that the significant additional actions which had been taken during the transition had resulted in our performance achieving the result it had.

#### **21/12 2020/21 PRE-AUDITED REPORT AND ACCOUNTS UPDATE**

**12/01 RECEIVED:** a report from

**12/02 NOTED:** that a meeting with the external auditors was due to take place the following week. There were a number of issues which had been highlighted including the impairment of assets, pensions and the bad debt provision. It was noted that a report would be sent out to the Board to update governors on the position after the meeting. The draft accounts would be presented to the next Board meeting due to be held on 23 November 2021 and a remote meeting of the Board will be held on 7 December 2021 to formally adopt the accounts prior

#### **21/13 2021/22 FINANCIAL POSITION UPDATE**

**13/01 NOTED that:**

- a) a range of potential outcomes had been presented to a recent meeting of the Finance and Resources Committee which ranged from a pessimistic

view, through to an optimistic view. It was noted that there had been a plateauing of enrolment and the position as of 26 October 2021 showed that the number of students enrolled were at the lower end of the range. A total of 1901 students had not gone through the full enrolment process and the reasons for this were largely unknown, although approximately 700 students were not continuing as a result of default by debt and other students were unable to secure funding.

- b) the outcome of the September recruitment exercise would be concluded the following week, when the student mix would be known and a review of the demographics of the students would be undertaken.
- c) there had been an underspend on staff and a review of the distribution of staffing would need to take place. It was noted that the University was currently £7m ahead of target.

**13/03 AGREED:** to include the outcome of the September recruitment exercise in the monthly update to governors.

#### **21/14 RISK MANAGEMENT**

**14/01 RECEIVED:** a report from the Risk Management on Institutional Risk.

**14/02 NOTED that:**

- a) the report outlined the top individual risks and undertook a deep dive of three of the risk categories. The report had been produced as a precursor to the risk register and had taken into account feedback from the Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) and UEB. The Chair of ARC had requested that governors provide any feedback to advise on the future risk register. It was agreed it was important to ensure that the right risks were captured, and it was noted that the risk register would be presented to the Board meeting due to be held in March 2022.
- b) the risk policy had been approved and work would be undertaken by the Risk Manager to provide training to risk managers within the University to ensure that they understood what was expected.

#### **21/15 ANNUAL REPORT FROM THE UEL STUDENTS' UNION**

**15/01 NOTED:** that it had not been possible to present the annual report of the Students' Union as its Board was currently inquorate and had not been able to approve the annual accounts. It was anticipated that this report would be presented to the next meeting of the Board.

**15/02 NOTED:** that FRC had already reviewed the 2019/20 financial statements of the Students' Union so the University had some oversight of its work.

## **21/16 ACADEMIC BOARD ANNUAL REPORT**

**16/01 RECEIVED:** an annual report from the University Secretary on the work of the Academic Board during 2020/21.

**16/02 NOTED:** that the annual report from Academic Board was being presented to the Board for the first time as part of the process of giving the Board of Governors oversight of matters of academic governance. The annual report covered the activities conducted during 2020/21. A separate report on academic assurance was also received which demonstrated that the Academic Board had fulfilled its terms of reference and met its responsibilities in relation to the conditions of registration set by the OfS. It was noted that this report would be presented to the Board on an annual basis and the Board approved the revised approach to annual monitoring.

**16/03 AGREED:** to approve the report and the revised approach to annual monitoring.

## **21/17 ACADEMIC BOARD EFFECTIVENESS REVIEW**

**17/01 RECEIVED:** a report from the University Secretary and Provost on the effectiveness review of Academic Board.

**17/02 NOTED that:**

a) a review of the effectiveness of Academic Board had been undertaken as part of a review of the University's academic governance processes. The report highlighted ten recommendations which required specific consideration. It was noted that the report had been considered by both the Academic Board and the University Executive Board and the recommendations had been accepted. The University Executive Board would devise an action plan to address the issues.

b) The Chair thanked the Provost and the University and the team who had worked on the effectiveness review for the work that had been undertaken in this area.

## **21/18 CHAIR'S BUSINESS**

**18/01 NOTED:** that there was no Chair's business.

**21/19 REPORT OF BUSINESS DISCUSSED AT ACADEMIC BOARD**

**19/01 RECEIVED and NOTED:** a report from the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Officer on the business discussed at Academic Board.

**SIGNED:** .....

**Chair of the Board of Governors**

**DATED:** .....



**21/20 ACADEMIC PARTNERSHIPS**

**20/01 RECEIVED and NOTED:** a report from Head of Academic Partnerships providing an overview, risk assessment and management of academic partnerships.

**21/20 ANNUAL CYCLE OF BUSINESS**

**19/01 RECEIVED and NOTED:** the annual cycle of business.

**21/21 USE OF THE CORPORATION'S SEAL**

**21/01 NOTED:** that the Corporation's seal has not been used since the last meeting of the Board held on 7 July 2021.

**21/22 DATES OF MEETINGS**

**22/01 NOTED:** that the dates of meetings for 2021/22 were as follows:

23 November 2021  
25 March 2022  
24 May 2022  
7 July 2022

**21/23 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

**23/01 NOTED that:**

- a) the University Secretary had circulated correspondence between UEL and the Office for Students (OfS) in relation to the publication of senior staff pay based on financial statements. UEL had been asked to confirm the accuracy of the details contained within the financial statements. The OfS were advised that a bonus of £7.5k was not a benefit but was pay due in 2018/19, which was paid in 2019/20. The OfS responded to advise that we could be in breach of the regulations and asked that the matter be brought to the attention of the Board of Governors and for the Board to agree on a course of action.
- b) this was an error which should have been identified by the external auditors and they could be held to account. It was agreed that an acknowledgement letter should be sent to the OfS confirming that the Board had been made aware of the situation. UEB and the External Auditors will need to be reminded that the Board is reliant on the information they provide in order to fulfil their responsibilities in respect of conditions of registration E3 and F3.

**23/02 AGREED:** to send an acknowledgment letter to the OfS.