

**CONFIRMED**

**UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON HIGHER EDUCATION CORPORATION**

**BOARD OF GOVERNORS**

**Minutes of the Board of Governors held on Thursday 7 July 2022 on the Sunborn Yacht Hotel, London**

**Present:** Anulika Ajufo (Chair), Ismail Amla, Steven Armstrong, Amanda Broderick (Vice-Chancellor & President), Jackie Craisatti, Trevor Critchlow, Les Ebdon, John Garwood, Regina Everitt, Bindi Karia, Mottie Kessler, Irfana Kottikulam-Aboobacker, Doris Olulode, Lavanya Rajendran and Janette Withey

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

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

**Apologies:** Tommy MacDonnell and Gary Stewart

**21/88 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

**88/01 NOTED:** there were no declarations of interest.

**21/89 MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 24 MAY 2022**

**89/01 RECEIVED and CONFIRMED:** the minutes of the meetings of the Board held on 24 May 2022.

**21/90 MATTERS ARISING**

**90/01 NOTED that:** there were no outstanding matters arising

**21/91 REPORT OF BUSINESS DISCUSSED AT STANDING COMMITTEES**

**91/01 RECEIVED:** a report from the Governance Manager on the business discussed at standing committees.

**91/02 NOTED that:**

- a) a meeting of the Ethics Advisory Committee had taken place. As a result of the position regarding Dylan Kwabena Mills aka Dizzee Rascal, a review of all honorary degree recipients was being conducted and one individual thus far had been identified as a potential issue. UEB would make a recommendation regarding the potential rescinding of any honorary awards and a final decision would be made by Academic Board.
- b) A draft General Feedback, Complaints and Concerns Procedure was also considered by the Ethics Advisory Committee. This procedure would now be reviewed by the new Director of People and Culture.

## **21/92 Q3 FINANCIAL FORECAST**

**92/01 RECEIVED:** a report from Deputy Vice-Chancellor & Chief Finance Officer in relation to the Q3 financial forecast.

**92/02 NOTED that:** the Q3 forecast had been carried out against the Month 9 management accounts. It was anticipated that the University would once again exceed its financial target surplus for the year and report substantial growth in income and in cash balances at year end, with the surplus likely to be between £13,406m - £21,436m.

## **21/93 CHARACTER AND MISSION OF THE UNIVERSITY**

**93/01 RECEIVED:** a presentation from the Vice-Chancellor & President on the Character and Mission of the University.

**93/02 NOTED:** that there had been significant changes to our student profile as a result of growth and diversification. This brought both advantages and disadvantages, but also impacted on our reputation as a local university when the student profile was changing so significantly. It was noted that this issue would be brought back to the Board for discussion in October.

**93/03 AGREED:** to discuss Character and Mission at Board Strategy Session in October 2022.

## **21/94 BUDGET 2022/23**

**94/01 RECEIVED:** a report from the Deputy Vice-Chancellor & Chief Finance Officer in relation to the budget for 2022/23.

**94/02 NOTED that:**

- a) the budget was predicated on a successful projected outcome for 2021/22 which substantially exceeded the budgeted surplus despite a significantly lower than target Semester A admissions which was offset by successful January and May 2022 intakes. It was proposed that the forecast surplus target for 2022/23 and 2023/24 would be set at £2.4m.

- b) the staff costs were currently at 50%, which was below the target of 53%, and was as largely a result of delays in recruiting staff. It was proposed to keep the target for staff costs at 53%.
- c) the cash position at the end of 2021/22 was anticipated to be extremely strong with a likely cash position of £76m and continued growth but more modest was forecast, was anticipated for the University going forward
- d) it was recognised that there would be significant price and pay pressures as a result of increased inflation, which currently stood at around 9%.
- e) two meetings of the Finance and Resource Committee (FRC) had been held to discuss the budget and robust challenges had been made. The Chair of FRC noted that the University was in a strong financial position and it was noted that the executive had performed well to put the University in such a position. He confirmed that the FRC were satisfied that the proposed budget was very robust and recommended the budget to the Board for approval.
- f) in relation to debtors, it was noted that there was some outstanding debt which was mainly in relation to self-funding students. The aim was to return the debt levels to the pre-Covid rate, although acknowledging that causing stress to students needed to be avoided. It was noted that the movement between the Student Loan Company and self-payers was the area that proved most difficult to recoup payments.

**94/03 AGREED:** to approve the budget for 2022/23.

**21/95 STRATFORD NEW BUILD PARTNER RECOMMENDATION**

**95/01 RECEIVED:** a presentation from the Deputy Vice-Chancellor & Chief Finance Officer on the Stratford Development.

**95/02 NOTED that:**

- a) as a result of the tendering process for the Stratford Development, three bids had been received. None of the bidders had expressed a desire to do the transaction as anticipated, but had submitted variations around design, the build, finance and operation options. All submitted a different approach to the build but none had not quantified either the financial or timing impact of their approaches.
- b) it was recognised that there were issues and uncertainty in relation to inflation on construction, funding rates and the total cost of the development as these could not be fixed until planning permission was obtained.

- c) the next step was for the bidders to submit their best and final offer in September 2022, which would then enable a recommendation to be made as to the preferred partner.
- d) there would be some preliminary work undertaken on the site in September 2022 to facilitate future development.
- e) the main concern was currently around potential delays in planning permission. It was noted that the outcome of the Design Review Panel would be fundamental to the timing of submitting the planning application. It was hoped that the planning application would be submitted and accepted by March 2023 to allow the facilities to open by September 2025.

**95/04 AGREED:** to bring back preferred partner to the Board ahead of selection

## **21/96 PEOPLE STRATEGY AND TOTAL REWARD DEAL**

**96/01 RECEIVED:** a report on the People Strategy and Total Reward Deal.

**96/02 NOTED that:**

- a) the People Strategy aimed to address wellness, fairness and success by promoting workplace wellness and well-being in a fair, inclusive, sustainable and anti-racist organisation and showing our professional fitness for a 4.0 and 5.0 economy.
- b) the Board were asked for their approval of the People Strategy and the direction of travel on the Total Reward Deal. It was noted that consultation on the Total Reward Deal would be ongoing throughout the 2022/23 academic year and the final recommended way forward would be returned to the Board of Governors for final approval.
- c) staff communications were being developed and included town hall meetings, weekly “in conversation with” events, consultation events etc, which were aimed at reducing e-mail toxicity and sign staff up to positive messages. It was noted that any comments, feedback or advice on the staff voice from governors would be welcomed.
- d) the need to manage poor performance was discussed, especially given that a recent staff survey showed that it was not felt that poor performance was managed well. The Shared Success Award would be broken down into different elements made up of an institutional and team shared success award and a separate individual excellence award. It was anticipated that the Total Reward Deal would seek to improve quality.

- e) a total of £2m had been included within the budget for the Shared Success Award as it was currently presented. However, the level of funding may need to be reviewed if the scheme was altered in any way.
- f) a query was raised as to how it would be possible to judge impact and assess value for money. It was noted that the impact would be assessed against the KPIs which had been set.
- g) in relation to risk mitigation, it was noted that communications were key and the need to ensure that they were aligned was recognised.
- h) the Chair thanked the outgoing interim Director of HR for her leadership of HR and for the work that had been undertaken on the People Strategy and Total Reward Deal.

**96/03 AGREED:**

- a) to approve the People Strategy.
- b) to approve the direction of travel of the Total Reward Deal.
- c) to provide regular updates to the Board on the progress in relation to the Total Reward Deal.

**21/97 MEDICAL SCIENCE UPDATE**

**97/01 RECEIVED:** a presentation from the PVC Careers and Enterprise on Medical Education.

**97/02 NOTED that:**

- a) the report followed on from the discussions at the May meeting of the Board of Governors in which the Board requested a clear set of criteria and rules to assess whether medical education was right for the University. Two go / no go points had been set. The first was at the Board meeting today and the second would be the final Board meeting of the 2022/2023 academic year.
- b) a set of criteria had been developed to include strategic fit, financial viability, opportunity cost, clinical placement capacity, contingency arrangements and staffing which had been agreed by UEB. It was recognised that this was an opportunity which was worth investigating, but there were risks.
- c) the operational expenditure for one year was £370k. It was queried as to whether it was possible to do more with less money, however, it was noted that the budget was largely made up of salaries including that of the

Medical Education Project Lead and the appointment of the Professor of Medical Education, which were essential to initiating consideration of this proposal.

- d) the Board were in favour of continuing with the exploration of medical education proposal. The importance of ensuring that the venture fitted with the University's values was raised and to ensure that the impact would be on the local community and local doctors, rather than taking international students who would ultimately not contribute to the work of the local community.
- e) a request was made for some evaluation on the softer and social impacts on the local community. It was also requested that an evaluation be undertaken to establish what the risk was if medical education was not taken forward.

**97/03 AGREED:**

- a) to approve the continuation of the investigations into the potential of medical education.
- b) that a mid-point review should be undertaken in February/March 2023.
- c) the Board of Governors to review the project development plan in July 2023 with a view to deciding whether to proceed with the project.

**21/98 UPDATE BY THE VICE-CHANCELLOR & PRESIDENT**

**98/01 RECEIVED:** a presentation by the Vice-Chancellor & President on Q3 institutional progress and performance.

**21/99 RESERVED BUSINESS**

**99/01 NOTED:** that the Board discussed action in relation to OfS business.

**21/100 ANNUAL REPORT ON THE WORK OF THE REMUNERATION AND STAFFING COMMITTEE**

**100/01 RECEIVED and APPROVED:** the annual report on the work of the Remuneration and Staffing Committee.

**21/101 RISK MANAGEMENT UPDATE**

**101/01 NOTED:** that an internal audit review of risk was currently being conducted. The outcome of this review would be fed back via the Audit and Risk Committee. It was also noted that there would be a review of the risk register over the summer.

## **21/102 ANNUAL REPORT ON HEALTH AND SAFETY AND THE HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY**

**102/01 RECEIVED:** the annual report on health, safety and wellbeing and the Health and Safety Policy.

**102/02 NOTED that:**

- a) the annual report on health, safety and wellbeing was presented to the Board to provide them with the necessary information and assurances about the health and safety activities and performance during 2021 and the early part of 2022.
- b) in relation to the pandemic, there had been a low level of cases within the University. Work had been undertaken to ensure compliance with government legislation.
- c) the level of sickness absence had reduced during the pandemic and there had been a significant improvement in these levels due to the focus on health and wellbeing.
- d) there had been a significant increase on numbers who had completed the online health and safety training. It was also noted that senior management were also completing the course, which set a good example.
- e) UEL had retained the RoSPA Gold award status in 2021. This was in recognition of a range of health and safety initiatives and best practice adopted across the University during 2019 and 2020. This was the 14<sup>th</sup> consecutive gold award and we continued to be sector leaders for this level of recognition.
- f) despite the extensive work undertaken in relation to health, safety and wellbeing at UEL, the University were served with an improvement notice in 2021 with reference to work related stress. It was noted that an appeal had been submitted and control measures had been presented which showed that there were measures in place in relation to health-related stress.

**102/03 AGREED:** to approve the Health and Safety Policy.

## **21/103 BYE-LAWS, REGULATIONS AND DELEGATION OF POWER**

**103/01 RECEIVED and APPROVED:** the proposed amendments to the Bye Laws and Standing Orders for the University and agreed to adopt these as the constitution of the University.

## **21/104 STUDENT PROTECTION PLAN**

**104/01 RECEIVED and NOTED:** a report from the Provost and Head of Quality on the UEL Student Protection Plan.

## **21/105 MEMBERSHIP OF THE BOARD FOR THE FORTHCOMING ACADEMIC YEAR**

**105/01 RECEIVED and NOTED:** a report from the Governance Manager on the membership of the Board for 2022/23.

**105/02 AGREED:**

- a) to approve the membership for 2022/23.
- b) to approve the appointment of independent members Ben Buckton and Amanjit Singh.
- c) to approve the appointment of academic staff members Matthew Almond and Sophia Bokhari.
- d) to note that a third candidate (Wen Jie Lee) had been interviewed by the Vice-Chancellor & President and would be recommended for appointment in the future when a vacancy was available.

## **21/106 SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS FOR THE FORTHCOMING ACADEMIC YEAR**

**106/01 RECEIVED and NOTED:** a report from the Governance Manager on the schedule of meetings for 2022/23.

**106/02 AGREED:** that governors should advise the Governance Manager if there were any issues with the scheduled dates.

## **21/107 CHAIR'S BUSINESS**

**107/01 NOTED that:**

- a) the Chair recognised the work of Ismail Amla and Mottie Kessler on the Board of Governors over their term of office and thanked them for their hard work and dedication to the Board.
- b) the Chair thanked the student governors for their work over the year and confirmed that Irfana Kottikulam-Aboobacker would be stepping down and would be replaced by Pippa Evans.
- c) the Deputy Chair of the Board recognised the work of Anulika Ajufu in her capacity as Chair of the Board and thanked her for her hard work and dedication, recognising the position of the Board currently, which had improved over her time as Chair.

**21/108 REPORT OF BUSINESS DISCUSSED AT ACADEMIC BOARD**

**108/01 RECEIVED and NOTED:** a report from the Quality Assurance Officer on the business discussed at Academic Board.

**21/109 ANNUAL CYCLE OF BUSINESS**

**109/01 RECEIVED and NOTED:** the annual cycle of business.

**21/110 USE OF THE CORPORATION'S SEAL**

**110/01 NOTED:** that the Corporation's Seal had not been used since the last meeting of the Board held on 24 May 2022.

**21/111 DATES OF MEETINGS**

**111/01 NOTED:** that the dates of meetings for 2022/23 were as follows:

- 18 October 2022 (Strategy Session and Board Meeting)
- 17 November 2022
- 6 December 2022 (Remote meeting to approve accounts)
- 30/31 March 2023 (Strategy Session and Board Meeting)
- 23 May 2023
- 4 July 2023

SIGNED: .....  
(Chair of the Board of Governors)

DATED: .....