

**CONFIRMED**

**UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON HIGHER EDUCATION CORPORATION**

**BOARD OF GOVERNORS**

**Minutes of the Board of Governors held on Tuesday 17 November 2022 in Room KD.2.22 on the Docklands Campus**

**Present:** John Garwood (Chair), Matthew Almond, Steven Armstrong (via Teams), Amanda Broderick (Vice-Chancellor & President), Jazz Bhogal, Sophia Bokhari, Ben Buckton, Jackie Craisatti, Trevor Critchlow, Pippa Evans, Regina Everitt, Amanjit Jhund, Tommy MacDonnell (via Teams), 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), Laura Clayton (Director of Strategy), Joseph Cooper (Director of People and Culture), Dean Curtis (DVC & Chief Finance Officer), Julia Davidson (Interim PVC, Impact and Innovation) and Scott Williams (Deputy Chief Marketing Officer)

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

**Apologies:** Les Ebdon, Sarah Fahy, Bindi Karia, Paul Marshall, Ian Pickup, Gary Stewart and Vanessa Varvas

**22/19 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

**19/01 NOTED:** there were no declarations of interest.

**22/20 MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD HELD ON 18 OCTOBER 2022**

**20/01 RECEIVED and CONFIRMED:** the minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 18 October 2022.

**20/02 NOTED that:**

- a) the Total Reward Deal was being discussed by the Remuneration and Staffing Committee and would be presented to the Board at their meeting in March 2023.
- b) confirmation was sought that the Pro Vice-Chancellor, Careers and Enterprise had spoken to the two independent governors – Bindi Karia and Gary Stewart in relation to the Royal Docks Centre for Sustainability.

## **22/21 MATTERS ARISING**

### **21/02 NOTED that:**

- a) the preferred partner for the Stratford New Build would be brought back to a future meeting of the Board.
- b) the mid-term review of the investigation into medical science would be presented to the Board at its meeting in March, with the full project proposal being presented to the Board at its meeting in July.
- c) the Treasury Policy was being prepared.

## **22/22 REPORT OF THE BUSINESS DISCUSSED AT STANDING COMMITTEES**

**22/01 RECEIVED and NOTED:** a report from the Governance Manager on business discussed at standing committees.

**22/02 NOTED:** that the Transformation Projects Committee had met on 1 November and had received a report from Director of IT and the Head of IT Projects and Business Engagement on the budget for the second phase of the Digital 1<sup>st</sup> project. A list of projects had been provided and would be considered by the Finance and Resources Committee on 25 November 2022.

## **22/23 DRAFT FINANCIAL STATEMENTS AND AUDITED ACCOUNTS FOR 2021/22**

### **23/02 NOTED that:**

- a) the audit was progressing. At present there was a forecast surplus of £12.3m, however, there was consideration being given to one final item, which could mean that the surplus would reduce to £10.1m.
- b) a briefing session had been arranged for 4 pm on 18 November for members of ARC/FRC and members were encouraged to attend as this was in preparation for the joint meeting which was due to take place on 25 November 2022.
- c) there were two significant items which related to issues in the past. The first was in relation to the classification of assets, which went back to 1992. The other was in relation to capital grants, which went back to 2012. These issues had not been raised previously and had not been picked up by the previous auditors.
- d) the new auditors had a different approach and, despite some issues at the start, the relationship with them had been constructive and work was being undertaken to resolve the final elements of the audit, this was in contrast to the issues which were faced over the previous two years.

## **22/24 Q1 UPDATE BY THE VICE-CHANCELLOR & PRESIDENT**

**24/01 RECEIVED:** a presentation by the Vice-Chancellor & President providing an update on Quarter 1.

**24/02 NOTED that:**

- a) international and domestic recruitment remained the top two risks of the University, however, it was noted that staff recruitment and retention was becoming one of the biggest challenges at this time. In relation to recruitment, UEL were currently 14.6% above target on the same time a year ago. It was recognised that there was more work to be done in relation to Postgraduate Home Students, however, in relation to financial sustainability, the University was in a good place.
- b) the Unions had announced 3 days of strike action and action short of a strike starting from the week commencing 23 November. It was noted that with the addition of the shared success reward, the total pay reward deal at the University was very close to what was being demanded and as such there was no reason for strike action. It was noted that a full day's pay would be deducted from staff for each day they took part in strike action. However, despite being legally entitled to take 100% of salary from staff who took part in partial performance, it had been agreed that 25% of salary would be deducted from those staff affected. It was noted that a communication would be sent to staff on week commencing 21 November 2022 to advise them of the position.
- c) preparations were being made in the academic schools to mitigate the impact of strike action on students. It was noted that on previous occasions it had been possible to avoid cancelling lectures, but the need to ensure that quality was maintained was recognised.

## **22/25 BUSINESS AND MANAGEMENT SITUATION ANALYSIS**

**25/01 RECEIVED:** a presentation from the Dean of the Royal Docks School of Business and Law.

## **22/26 MANAGEMENT INFORMATION TRANSFORMATION INTRODUCTION**

**26/01 RECEIVED:** a presentation from the Director of Strategy, Information and Transformation on her role at the University covering programme management, project management, benefits management, change management and continuous improvement.

**26/02 NOTED:** that the next steps would be to have conversations with members of the Board of Governors and the University Management Board by the end of December 2022 with a view to agreeing the scope and timetable for

organisation design work to create the Strategy, Information & Transformation services, review the existing capabilities across the university by the end of December 2022 and review the service maturity across these disciplines by the end of January 2023. This would allow the investment proposals to be prioritised for data strategy discovery, change management setup and organisation design by the end of November 2022 and establish a high-level service dependency with other functions by the end of January 2023. The business case for investment levels would be completed by February 2023 and it was anticipated that the new structure would go-live in May 2023.

## **22/27 TRACK MY FUTURE DEMONSTRATION**

**21/01 RECEIVED:** a demonstration of Track my Future from the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education and Experience) was deferred to the next meeting of the Board.

## **22/28 STUDENTS' UNION ANNUAL REPORT**

**28/01 RECEIVED:** a report from the Chief Executive of the Students' Union providing an update on student activities.

**28/02 NOTED that:**

- a) the report presented by the Students' Union reflected on the activities of the UEL Students' Union in 2021/22. It was noted that a number of activities had been put on which had attracted good engagement from students. It was also noted that there was an increased level of membership compared to other years.
- b) the Students' Union had an excellent advice team which supported students on academic appeals, complaints and regulations. The number of contacts from students continued to rise, but a new process to triage all queries from students had been introduced which had successfully reduced the number of students requiring advice for an advice caseworker. A request was made by the Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee to be provided with the data on the number of complaints and appeals which were dealt with by the Advice Team.
- c) one of the key goals of the Students' Union was to resolve the issues around how elections were conducted. This had been done and the issues had been reduced and, although there were fewer candidates, they were better prepared to undertake the roles. It was also considered that there was a better process to appoint school representatives and, those that were in post, were more interactive.
- d) the Students' Union were keen to implement a ban on student-staff relationships, which they believed was essential to protect students. It was noted that the current policy did not allow relationships for individuals under 18 years of age or with adults which were at risk. However,

individuals aged 18 and over were strongly discouraged to form personal relationships, but if they were to do so, then this information should be disclosed.

- e) the Students' Union stated that they had been sent a copy of the draft policy by HR Services and comments were submitted by the SU who stated that they wanted an outright ban, rather than the current proposal. This was the extent of the consultation with students that had occurred in relation to this policy. There was concern expressed as policies which affected students should go to the Education and Experience Committee, followed by the Academic Board. The Vice-Chancellor and President originally stated that she thought the policy had been through the full governance process. However, it was established that as this was a HR policy and had been discussed by UEB following consultation with staff and student groups. It was noted this had not been discussed directly with the Students' Union or considered through the committee process. It was agreed that the policy would go through the full governance process and that the Students' Union would be involved in further discussions.
- f) in relation to the National Student Survey about students' unions, it was noted that the score of 54% had been maintained, which was above the sector average.
- g) a new strategic plan had been developed which had been approved by the Board of Trustees and it was hoped would be launched in January 2023.
- h) concerns were raised about the accommodation offered to the Students' Union as the common rooms used by the students had been removed and as a result the facilities used by students such as the microwave, kettle and sink were no longer available. These facilities were regarded as essential in supporting students and getting them to use the social spaces and engage with the Students' Union.
- i) the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Students' Union stated that approximately 65% of the Students' Union space had been taken back over the last two years. It was recognised that the University needed to provide space to the Students' Union and as such the spaces provided should be based on what the Students' Union believed it needed.
- j) It was noted that there had been difficulties in getting approval from the Students' Union to occupy spaces allocated within the University. The space currently offered on the Docklands campus was at the heart of the campus and there was a plan going forward in relation to the Stratford campus. The CFO stated it was essential that the Students' Union were engaged in using these spaces and providing services to students. The CEO stated that the space provided at the Docklands campus was a small

reception area and was not large enough to allow the Students' Union to organise activities and events. He asked the Board to note that the space offered in Stratford was a shared room for 6 – 7 weeks from September, with a slightly larger space being offered at a later stage. This space was declined as it was not suitable for the needs of the Students' Union.

- k) it was recognised that there were some issues with the relationship between the University and the Students' Union. It was agreed all parties should work on creating a constructive relationship noting that the University had an obligation to ensure that value for money was achieved in what it provided to the Students' Union. The relationship was being reviewed by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Education and Experience through a memorandum of understanding and it was agreed that the structure needed to improve to ensure that the Students' Union were in a position to operate effectively.
- l) the Chair of the Board requested that the University Mental Health Charter submission prepared by the Students' Union be circulated to members of the Board.

**28/03 AGREED:**

- a) that the memorandum of understanding should be considered at the February 2023 meeting of the Audit and Risk Committee and then at the Board meeting in March 2023.
- b) the University Mental Health Charter Submission prepared by the Students' Union be circulated to members of the Board.

**22/29 ANNUAL REPORT ON THE RESEARCH INTEGRITY CONCORDAT**

**29/01 RECEIVED and NOTED:** the annual statement for the Concordat to support research integrity for the academic year 2021-22.

**29/02 NOTED that:**

- a) the annual statement sets out our commitment to the concordat to support research activity and that the University conducts its research in line with the concordat.
- b) a number of examples of world leading research were highlighted including Michael Pinsky who designed the Pollution Pods which were featured in a nationwide campaign, demonstrating the ways that universities were actively tackling the climate emergency. The Peatland Pavillion co-developed by UEL in which the University was heavily involved in creating both the physical and virtual Peatland Pavillion which aimed to raise awareness and become a hub for collaboration around peatland policy issues, research, best practice and innovations.

- c) it was generally felt that the outcome of the REF should have been better than it was. A review of research and impact had been undertaken by the Pro Vice-Chancellor for Impact and innovation and it was clear that, although we do have world leading impact in some areas, the narrative to support this was not strong enough. It was noted that a centralised research strategy had been drafted and work was being undertaken on an implementation plan building towards the next REF.

**29/03 AGREED:** to approve the annual statement.

**22/30 REPORT OF THE AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE TO THE BOARD AND VICE-CHANCELLOR & PRESIDENT**

**30/01 RECEIVED:** the annual report of the Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) to the Board and Vice-Chancellor & President.

**30/02 NOTED:** that the annual report could not be completed until the post audit report had been received. Once this was received and the annual report of the Audit and Risk Committee was completed, this would be sent to the Chair of ARC and the Chair of the Board to approve via Chair's action.

**30/03 AGREED:** that the Chair of ARC and the Chair of the Board could approve the annual report of the Audit and Risk Committee via Chair's action.

**22/31 RISK MANAGEMENT**

**31/01 RECEIVED:** a report from the Risk Manager providing an update on risk maturity and the updated institutional risk register.

**31/02 AGREED:** to defer this item to the next meeting.

**22/32 ANNUAL REPORT ON THE PREVENTION OF TERRORISM**

**32/01 RECEIVED:** the annual report on the Prevention of Terrorism from the University Secretary.

**32/02 NOTED that:**

- a) that the annual report on the Prevention of Terrorism was a statutory report which was required by the OfS for submission by 1 December 2022. It was noted that there had been a change to the reporting requirements, and it was now necessary to be specific about the number of events which had been cancelled. It was noted that on this occasion the University had not cancelled any events. This requirement mainly related to the freedom of speech and the OfS required institutions to have a good reason for cancelling events. It was anticipated that the Higher Education Bill on the freedom of speech would make it more difficult going forward to refuse an event on the basis that it might raise public order concerns, it was noted that there would be an expectation for security and other arrangements to be enhanced in order to accommodate such speakers.

- b) there had been a total of 5 safeguarding cases in the 2021/22 academic year, two of which raised issues relating to extremism. It was stated in the report that a more co-ordinated approach to monitoring safeguarding cases would be required going forward.
- c) Engagement with training remained high as this had been given priority at staff development week and as part of induction. It was agreed to review the number of staff that required to be trained on Prevent in 2022/23.

**32/03 AGREED:**

- a) to approve the annual report on Prevent.
- b) to review the number of staff that required to be trained on Prevent in 2022/23.

**22/33 NATIONAL STUDENT SURVEY**

**33/01 RECEIVED:** a report from the Provost on the National Student Survey Report for 2022.

**33/02 NOTED that:**

- a) there was some frustration that, despite the many improvements that were being made, this was not reflected in our representation within the National Student Survey.
- b) It was confirmed that the NSS was an area of focus for the university and the approach for this year had been different. An action plan was being used to ensure that the final year students had a good experience, particularly in relation to academic quality, the enrichment programme and learning resources. More work was also being undertaken to ensure that there were also more links with industry and connections with jobs.
- c) in the students' view, it was felt that there were issues outside of lectures which had a direct impact on the NSS and the student experience. These related to academic support and academic advice, particularly in relation to the allocation of academic advisors, which needed to be addressed.
- d) it was recognised that there was forward momentum in this area, however, it took time for key strategic initiatives to have an impact on the outcome of the NSS. It was noted that the UEB-led Level 6 Curation Plan would create a framework for targeted communications and interventions for Level 6 students from August through to the survey period in the spring of 2023.



## **22/34 EXTERNAL EFFECTIVENESS GOVERNANCE REVIEW**

**34/01 RECEIVED:** a report from the University Secretary on the external effectiveness governance review.

**34/02 NOTED that:**

- a) the Board had agreed at its meeting in July 2022 that an external governance review should be conducted within the 2022/23 academic year. It had been agreed that the review should take place towards the end of the academic year, reporting to the July 2023 meeting of the Board.
- b) a range of options were available from a light-touch review to a much more detailed report. It was noted that the steer of the Board was required, however, the Governance and Search Committee would crystallise the approach.
- c) an intensive review had been undertaken in 2018 and it was felt that it was not necessary to have a further intensive review. A mid-range review was preferred. It was suggested that the committees which are reviewed should be prioritised and an analysis of the interdependencies of the committees undertaken.

## **22/35 UPDATE ON THE APPOINTMENT OF DEPUTY CHAIR**

**35/02 NOTED:** that no-one had put themselves forward for the position of Deputy Chair. The position was restricted to independent members of the Board and if anyone had an interest on taking on the role, then they were encouraged to contact the Chair of the Board, the Senior Independent Governor or the University Secretary for more details. It was noted that there would be support provided to facilitate an individual's ability to take on the role and some of the duties of the Deputy Chair could be realigned.

## **22/36 REPORT ON THE BUSINESS DISCUSSED AT ACADEMIC BOARD**

**36/01 AGREED:** to defer the report to the next meeting of the Board due to be held on 6 December 2022.

**22/37 DATES OF MEETINGS**

**37/01 NOTED:** that the dates of meetings for 2022/23 were as follows:

- 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:** .....