

CONFIRMED

UNIVERSITY OF EAST LONDON HIGHER EDUCATION CORPORATION

BOARD OF GOVERNORS

Minutes of the Board of Governors held on 4 July 2023 in University Square Stratford

Present: John Garwood (Chair), Matthew Almond, Steven Armstrong, Bibin Bobacham, Amanda Broderick (Vice-Chancellor & President), Jazz Bhogal (via Teams), Sophia Bokhari, Ben Buckton, Jackie Craissati, Trevor Critchlow, Les Ebdon, Sarah Fahy, Amanjit Jhund, Bindi Karia, Aswin Mathew and Janette Withey

Hassan Abdalla (Provost), Bugewa Apampa (Dean of the Office for Institutional Equity), Matt Bellgard (PVC, Impact and Innovation), Jim Benson (University Secretary), Laura Clayton (Director of Strategy), Joseph Cooper (Director of People and Culture), Dean Curtis (DVC & Chief Finance Officer), Deborah Lewis (Head of Strategic Engagement), Paul Marshall (PVC, Careers and Enterprise), Amy Rogerson (Chief of Staff), Jane Tapsell (Chief Student Officer), Vanessa Varvas (Chief Marketing Officer) and Scott Williams (Deputy Chief Marketing Officer)

Officer: Jane Thomas (Governance Manager)

Apologies: Regina Everitt, Tommy MacDonnell and Doris Olulode

22/77 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

77/01 NOTED: there were no declarations of interest.

22/78 MEMBERSHIP OF THE BOARD AND STANDING COMMITTEES FOR 2023/24

78/01 RECEIVED: a report from the Governance Manager on the membership of the Board and Standing Committees.

78/02 NOTED that:

- a) the Chair advised the Board that Gary Stewart had now resigned as a governor and thanked him for all his work as a valued governor.
- b) the membership of the Board and Standing Committees was noted.

78/03 AGREED: the Board agreed to appoint the two new student governors – Aswin Mathew and Bibin Bobachan.

22/79 MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD HELD ON 23 MAY 2023

79/01 RECEIVED and CONFIRMED: the minutes of the meeting of the Board held on 23 May 2023.

22/80 MATTERS ARISING

80/01 RECEIVED: a report from the Governance Manager on matters arising.

80/02 NOTED that:

- a) Appointment of a Chancellor - the process for the appointment of a Chancellor was ongoing. It was noted that there would be an update in September in relation to the two primary targets.
- b) Stratford New Build Partner - two bids had been received, both of which were being funded by Aviva. It was anticipated that the planning process would take 5-6 weeks before being considered by Newham on 19 September 2023.

22/81 REPORT OF BUSINESS DISCUSSED AT STANDING COMMITTEES

81/01 RECEIVED: a report from the Governance Manager on the business discussed at standing committees.

81/02 NOTED: that it was the responsibility of the Board to formally appoint the external auditors for the forthcoming audit.

81/03 AGREED: it was agreed to approve the appointment of Buzzacotts LLP as the external auditors on the recommendation of the Audit and Risk Committee.

22/82 RISK SUMMARY

82/01 RECEIVED: a risk summary from the Risk Manager

82/02 NOTED that:

- a) the Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) confirmed that the risk summary had been discussed at ARC.
- b) a deep dive had been undertaken in relation to the University's reliance on a single international student market, the risk of trade union action leading to operational disruptions to student teaching and assessment and the failure to promote and delivery equity and inclusion for our students.
- c) the summary showed that we were broadly on track with the actions and mitigations, with the exception of cyber-security where there were some outstanding actions. This was largely due to issues in relation to staffing, however the Deputy Vice-Chancellor confirmed that there was currently a full team in place.
- d) the top three risks would be discussed at ARC, but they would come to the Board for discussion.

- e) a risk in relation to insurance had been included on the risk register due to issues with premiums and coverage and exemptions. It was noted that while the University does not have cyber security in place, the cost of obtaining comprehensive coverage for all eventualities could be disproportionate due to the exemptions that were imposed by the scheme.

22/83 UPDATE BY THE VICE-CHANCELLOR AND PRESIDENT

83/01 RECEIVED: a presentation providing an update from the Vice-Chancellor & President.

83/02 NOTED that:

- a) that the Q3 update of the institutional KPIs were positive, with the only target not met being in relation to graduate progression. It was noted that this was a reflection of the graduates who were surveyed in 2022. The next cohort were due to complete the survey towards the end of July and arrangements were being put in place to provide support to these students. It was recognised that there was a need to drill down to the detail to establish how improvements could be made going forward.
- b) in relation to TEF and B3 progression metrics, it was noted that of the 7 indicators, 4 were positive.
- c) in relation to the current strategic investment priorities, the following were priorities:
- Careers-1st teaching and learning environment
 - A student ready, inclusive, health, competitively attractive environment to study work and live
 - A carbon zero environment
 - Stratford Health Campus Developments
 - Strategically- aligned Impact and Enterprise infrastructure
- d) the two areas for investigation were the Stratford Cultural Quarter and the Docklands Green Zone. It was noted that the development of the Stratford Cultural Quarter would be helped by the development of Stratford station, which would attract development to the surrounding areas.
- e) it was recognised that there were some big social challenges around Stratford and a query was raised as to whether UEL was satisfied that the plans for Stratford Circus would address some of these issues. It was noted that the Youth Empowerment Services had been focused on providing additional routes to young people within Newham with more enhanced activities than could have been achieved previously.

22/84 MEDICAL EDUCATION UPDATE

84/01 RECEIVED: a presentation from the Medical Education Project Lead providing an update on Medical Education.

84/02 NOTED that:

- a) the NHS Workforce Plan had been published on 30 June in which it was noted that it was planned to double medical school places starting from September 2025 through a mix of expanding existing schools, establishing new ones in areas where there were the greatest staff shortfalls and introducing up to 2000 apprenticeships per annum. This was particularly relevant to UEL as there was a staff shortfall in the London area.
- b) a meeting had taken place in mid-May between the Vice-Chancellors of CCU and UofK and the Dean of KMMS in which there was cautious support for the development of a partnership.
- c) a query was raised as to whether the Board would be provided with the necessary information at its October meeting of the Board in order for a final decision to be made. It was noted that a decision would have to be made in October in order to allow preparation before a bidding process, which was due to start in mid 2024 or early 2025.
- d) a request was made for information to be provided to the October meeting of the Board as to what any alternative proposals could be.

22/85 Q3 FINANCIAL POSITION

85/01 RECEIVED: a report from the Interim Head of Management Accounts, Associate Director of Financial Operations and the Director of Finance on the Q3 financial position including capital update.

85/02 NOTED that:

- a) the Q3 forecast income and surplus was below that at Q2, but still within the range given.
- b) the operating expenditure was likely to increase as the impact of the full year of non-pay expenditure came through.
- c) the cash position was strong, and work was progressing as fast as possible in relation to the summer works. It was noted that the capex was likely to be determined by the contractors as the accounting period was in the middle of that time.
- d) the Chair of the Board congratulated the whole team on the financial position of the university.

- e) a query was raised in relation to debt management. It was noted that the cash recovery from self-paying students was going well. It was acknowledged that there were a number of students who had particular problems and as far as possible an elongated payment profile had been extended to them. It was noted that provision was made in the budget for bad debt every year, however, the level of debt recovery had still not returned to that of 2018, but it was noted that the university had increased significantly in size with a high level of self-funding students.
- f) the University was on track to meet financial targets for 2022/23.

22/86 BUDGET FOR 2023/24

86/01 RECEIVED: a report from the Deputy Vice-Chancellor & Chief Finance Officer and Director of Finance on the draft budget for 2023/24 and future years forecasts.

86/02 NOTED that:

- a) the budget had been formulated recognising the current position, with 50,000 applications from overseas students and 16,000 applications from home students. This was against a decrease of 60,000 home students across the nation and against a backdrop of the student age population increasing, which would usually result in an increase in demand.
- b) although the number of applications had increased since the last meeting of the Finance and Resources Committee, it was recognised that there was a need to be prudent about new staff entrants being put in the budget. If schools were not able to recruit undergraduate home students, then they would have to find an alternative way to bridge the income gap.
- c) there were a number of significant issues highlighted which included the pricing position of our degrees. It was noted that unregulated fees had been increased by 8%, however, it was recognised that UEL needed to remain competitive and not price itself out of the international market. The shape of future student recruitment and any continuing policy would impact on demand.
- d) there was also a risk associated with the length of time that pay awards and inflationary levels persisted at elevated levels. A pay increase of 7% had been reflected in the budget.
- e) it was recognised that this was a time to be prudent as UEL moved from a stable income to a more volatile situation, especially taking into account our reliance on international fees. It was also noted that the UEL profile changed, then there was a need to recognise the different demands on the estate.

86/03 AGREED: to approve the budget for 2023/24.

86/04 RECEIVED: a report from the Director of Estates, Director of IT and the Deputy Vice-Chancellor & Chief Financial Officer.

86/05 NOTED that:

- a) in relation to the Connected Campus project, the progress to date on the small to medium areas had been very good and was close to the projected numbers for outturn this financial year. There were still a number of projects which were traversing the annual account date including:
- the work on USS was starting at the end of July. The timeframe had shifted in order to allow the academic year to finish.
 - a provision had been made in the 2022/23 budget for the land to the West, however, there had been no expenditure against this budget.
 - in relation to the Digital 1st project, the spend had been focussed on the student experience.
 - we were behind in relation to corporate systems investment, however, there were some significant changes, and it was expected that the projects would be back on track within the next few months.
- b) a programme of summer works had been included in the budget for £4m in equipment and teaching room spaces. It was noted that the proposals will be presented to the next meeting of the Finance and Resources Committee.

22/87 ANNUAL REPORT ON HEALTH AND SAFETY

87/01 RECEIVED: an annual report from the Interim Director of Health and Safety on Health, Safety and Wellbeing.

87/02 NOTED that:

- a) the Health and Safety report aimed to provide assurance to Governors about UEL's health and safety activities and performance between June 2022 and June 2023. It was noted that more regular reports on health and safety would be provided to UEB and a report on Health and Safety would also be considered by the Audit and Risk Committee in September 2023.
- b) a query was raised in relation to fire safety and where the residual risk of the infrastructure was picked up. It was noted that this responsibility sat between HR and Estates but was covered by the report.
- c) occupational health was being outsourced, which was a temporary arrangement at presented.

87/03 AGREED: the Board agreed to approve the report.

22/88 STUDENT PROTECTION PLAN

88/01 RECEIVED and APPROVED: a report from the Head of Quality Assurance and Enhancement, the Provost and Dean of the Office for Institutional Equity.

22/89 DEGREE AWARD STATEMENT

89/01 RECEIVED and NOTED: a report from the Provost and the Head of Quality Assurance and Enhancement on the Degree Outcomes Statement for 2023.

89/02 NOTED that:

- a) the Degree Outcomes Statement provided the Board with an overview of how the integrity and credibility of academic qualifications was maintained and the corresponding data. It was noted that the statement covered the years 2021/22 and was therefore lagging by a year.
- b) UEL's 2021/22 data showed that the award of good honours degrees to be 74.0% with 33.6% at First class. First-Class degrees were broadly in line with the sector average of 31.8% but for good honours overall (74.1%) they were marginally less than the sector average of 78.2%. Trends at subject level were largely in line with those at institutional level.
- c) the degree awarding gap between UEL White and Global Ethnic Majority (GEM) identifying students stood at 13.5% for 2021/22 (from 21.1% in 2018/19). It was noted that it was a strategic goal to eliminate this gap entirely by 2028. Gender data has converged for the last 5 years and in 2021/22 a 1% gap was observed with slightly more good honours degrees awarded to men.

22/90 REGULATORY UPDATE

90/01 RECEIVED and NOTED: a report from the University Secretary providing an update on regulatory matters.

22/91 STUDENTS' UNION – UPDATE ON COLLABORATIVE WORKING INITIATIVE

91/01 RECEIVED: a report providing an update on the collaborative working initiatives with the Students' Union.

91/02 AGREED: to review this item at the next meeting of the Board to enable the student governors to settle into their role.

22/92 ANNUAL REVIEW OF RISK MANAGEMENT

92/01 RECEIVED and NOTED: a report from the Risk Manager providing an institutional risk report for May 2023.

22/93 CHAIR'S BUSINESS

93/01 NOTED: that there was no Chair's business.

22/94 SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS FOR THE FOLLOWING ACADEMIC YEAR

94/01 RECEIVED and NOTED: a schedule of meetings for the 2023/24 academic year.

22/95 UPDATE ON EXTERNAL EFFECTIVENESS GOVERNANCE REVIEW

95/01 RECEIVED: an oral update from the University Secretary on the External Effectiveness Governance Review.

95/02 NOTED: that two bids had been received and the External Effectiveness Review Steering Group would meet to make a decision as to which one to take forward.

22/96 AWARD OF THE UNIVERSITY MEDAL

96/01 RECEIVED: a report from the Vice-Chancellor & President on the Award of the University Medal.

96/02 NOTED: that it was proposed that the Vice-Chancellor & President's Award of the University Medal was conferred on Shabir Randeree for his extraordinary contribution to the University over the last 7 years in his role as Chancellor.

96/03 AGREED: to award the Vice-Chancellor & President's Award of the University Medal to Shabir Randeree.

22/97 REPORT ON THE BUSINESS DISCUSSED AT ACADEMIC BOARD

97/01 RECEIVED and NOTED: a report from the Quality Officer on the business discussed at Academic Board on 14 June 2023.

22/98 USE OF THE CORPORATION'S SEAL

98/01 NOTED: that the Corporation's Seal has not been used since the last meeting of the Board.

22/99 DATES OF MEETINGS

99/01 NOTED: that the dates of meetings for 2023/24 were as follows: