

University of Central Lancashire
Unreserved Minutes of the Board Meeting Held on 24th September 2020 commencing at 10.00am

Present (via video-conference):

David Taylor (Chair)

Andrea Adams	Richard Hext
Graham Baldwin	Sue Ion
Zuleikha Chikh	Lesley Lloyd
Nicky Danino	Ruth Lowry
Maria Darby-Walker	Anne McCarthy
Jim Edney	Bill McQueen
Ridwanah Gurjee	Lorraine Norris

Also in attendance (via video-conference):

Michael Ahern (Chief Information and Infrastructure Officer)
George Charles (Chief Finance Officer)
Ruth Connor (Chief Marketing Officer)
Ian Fisher (University Secretary and General Counsel and Clerk to the Board)
Ken Lee (Chief People Officer)
Lynne Livesey (Deputy Vice Chancellor)
Peter McMellon (assisting the Clerk to the Board)
Fiona Winters (Deputy Clerk to the Board)
Lisa Atty (Governance Support Officer)

UB855. Welcome and Apologies

The Chair welcomed all present to the meeting.

Apologies for absence had been received from Fiona Armstrong.

UB856. Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interests other than those recorded under UB865 below.

UB857. Chair's Announcements

The Chair reported that, having completed all his one-to-one meetings with individual Board members, he had then summarised the outcomes from those discussions in an e-mail to all Board Members. Mr Taylor reported that the discussions had largely been very positive and supportive. However, where specific issues had been raised, the Chair would take these forward personally or would refer the matter to the Vice Chancellor.

UB858. Reserved and Unreserved Minutes of the University Board Meeting held on 25th June 2020

Resolved: That the Reserved and Unreserved Minutes of the University Board Meeting held on 25th June 2020 were agreed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

UB859. Matters Arising from the University Board Meeting held on 25th June 2020

(i) UB853 - Any Other Business - Nominations Committee - Board Members Appointments

Mr Fisher reported that he had contacted the four Board members (Andrea Adams, Jim Edney, Bill McQueen and Richard Hext) whose terms of office are due to expire and that all four had confirmed their willingness to continue as members of the Board if re-appointed. Since two of the four are members of the Nominations Committee (including that Committee's Chair), the matter of re-appointment is being referred directly to the Board on this occasion.

(At this point, each of Mrs Adams, Mr Edney, Mr McQueen and Mr Hext left the meeting temporarily as consideration was given to her/his individual re-appointment)

Having considered the proposed re-appointment of each member, the Board agreed that it would be in the University's best interests to retain the skills and expertise of those individuals.

Resolved: That Board member terms of office be extended as follows:

Andrea Adams - for a two year period expiring on 31st July 2022

Jim Edney - for a two year period expiring on 31st July 2022

Bill McQueen - for a two year period expiring on 31st July 2022

Richard Hext - for a three year period expiring on 19th September 2023.

UB860. Vice-Chancellor's Report

Professor Baldwin presented his report. A copy of the report is set out in the Minute Book.

Professor Baldwin reminded the Board that detailed updates on a range of matters had been provided at the Board Briefing session on 4th September 2020. He also pointed out that Student Recruitment is now covered under a separate item on the agenda as previously agreed.

- External Factors

(i) Covid

The University is maintaining effective dialogues with all key stakeholders (local and national) and is thus adequately informed on all relevant aspects. It is now expected that breaches (either by the University itself or by its students) will be treated uncompromisingly by the authorities, but to counter-balance this, the attitude in the country and in the local community is markedly more 'welcoming' for arriving students than had been feared. National reports confirm that all institutions are facing significant challenges in the provision of safe environments, and UCLan has had to

deal with cases of Covid infection (students and staff) and need for self-isolation. This has been achieved effectively.

It is reassuring that the national target continues to be some 'return to face-to-face teaching and learning'. UCLan's blended approach to delivery is working well. It will be of further assistance once formal 'key worker' status is confirmed for UCLan staff.

It is expected that students and staff will soon adapt to the different style of 'university life' which is now being provided. However, there is at present a heightened alertness and rate of response to student needs at the outset of the new academic year and particularly with regard to new student starters.

In noting the Chair's comment about the new NHS app, Professor Baldwin confirmed that the University's use of the SafeZone app was already proving to be popular and effective. The Vice Chancellor's Group (VCG) will consider the NHS app in the coming days.

A permanent Covid testing centre has now been established on the University's Vernon car-park.

Unlike the reported position in many institutions, there has thus far been no significant objections from or issues with the trades unions on Covid-related matters.

In response to Mr Edney's question, Professor Baldwin outlined the contents of the University's 'Outbreak Response Plan'. The Plan had been forwarded, as required of all institutions, to the Department for Education, and consideration was now being given to the Department's guidance in the light of all submitted plans.

(ii) **Reserved Minute - Text Redacted**

- **Internal Activity**

(i) **Reserved Minute - Text Redacted**

(ii) Brand Refresh

In confirming that the brand refresh had proceeded (following the Board's review of the planned refresh at the Board Briefing on 4th September 2020), Professor Baldwin confirmed that the new logo had received a largely positive reception. He thanked Board members for their various individual contributions to the refresh process.

Reserved Minute - Text redacted

Regarding the new Strategic Plan, the development process is continuing, with lessons from the pandemic and lockdown experiences being incorporated into the process. It is unlikely that as much consultation as might have originally been envisaged will now be possible, but, with completion of the identification of key strategies stage now close to completion, full consultation with the Board will shortly follow, possibly including a further Board Briefing session dedicated to the emerging draft.

Reserved Minute - Text Redacted

Resolved: That

(i) the Vice-Chancellor's Update Report be received, and

(ii) **Reserved Minute - Text Redacted**

UB861. Academic Board Annual Assurance Report

Dr Livesey presented her report. A copy of the report is set out in the Minute Book.

Dr Livesey reminded the Board that the Annual Report was designed to provide the Board with evidence to show that the University and its Academic Board continued to comply with the highest standards of academic governance and specifically with the requirements of the OfS in that regard. In addition to the reports submitted to the Board, the appointment of two Board members (Dr Ion and Mrs Lloyd) to the Academic Board also served to provide the Board with insights and assurances.

Dr Livesey drew attention to the work of the Course Planning Committee and to the strategic overview which the Academic Board derived through that Committee's work on the University's academic portfolio, including work on new courses proposals and on courses withdrawals/suspension.

The Academic Board had noted very positive feedback following the review by the Institutional External Examiner, and feedback in general from examination bodies had provided reassurance that academic standards were being maintained by UCLan and, specifically, that there had been no detriment to students following the changes in response to the pandemic and the lockdown. Progression rates for students had also improved, despite the challenges of the pandemic.

In examining the Annual Report, the contributions of the Academic Board's sub-committees were discussed.

Dr Ion commented on the evidence of a rigorous approach to the maintenance of high academic standards, with adherence to an extensive set of rules and procedures being closely monitored. Mrs Lloyd agreed that the involvement of Board members at meetings of the Academic provided direct insights into the University's management of academic standards.

Reserved Minute - Text Redacted

In suggesting that the Annual Report offered evidence of close compliance with OfS Conditions of Registration, Dr Livesey confirmed that there were no issues to which the Board's attention needed to be drawn.

The Board concurred with the first-hand assessments of Dr Ion and Mrs Lloyd and, in accepting the Annual Assurance Report, congratulated Dr Livesey on overseeing the maintenance of the highest standards in the areas covered by the University's Academic Board.

Resolved: That the Academic Board Annual Assurance Report provides assurance that the University's Academic Board is effectively fulfilling its responsibilities in accordance with its Terms of Reference.

UB862. Reserved Minute - Text Redacted

UB863. Reserved Minute - Text Redacted

UB864. Committee Chair's Update : Audit and Risk Committee (16th July 2020)

Mrs Lowry provided a verbal report on the main matters addressed at the meeting of the Audit and Risk Committee on 16th July 2020.

The Committee had noted the position on the emerging new University Strategic Plan, and the arrangements for risk management during the Plan development process.

The Committee was also updated on proposals for completion of the Corporate Governance Statement (included in the Financial Statements/Annual accounts).

The final reports and resultant actions from four reviews by the Internal Auditor (on Mental Health - Student Wellbeing, HESA Student Record data quality, International Collaboration and Student Retention, Progression and Support) were noted.

Reserved Minute - Text Redacted

Finally, Mrs Lowry commented on the annual Value for Money statement which the University is required to produce and publish.

Resolved: That the Chair's Update be noted.

UB865. Reserved Minute - Text Redacted

UB866. Masterplan Delivery Update

Mr Ahern presented the Masterplan Delivery Update report dated 14 September 2020. A copy of the report is set out in the Minute Book.

Mr Ahern commented on each of the main developments, confirming that the EIC is now fully operational and that the Student Centre is on course for completion in time for occupation by the start of the 2021/22 academic year.

The University has managed the unforeseen challenges of Covid and lockdown effectively (for example, through the stockpiling of materials when opportune).

The Chair agreed with Mr Ahern's positive assessment of the University's new visual contributions to the City centre. The developments are particularly welcome under the current challenging circumstances.

Board members concurred with the views expressed as regards the impressive visual impact of the work. The Chair also reported that the lead architect had received an award for work on the Masterplan.

Resolved : That the Masterplan Update Report be noted.

UB867. Any Other Business

(i) University Board - Committees Structure

Mr Fisher outlined proposals for changes to the current Committee structure. It is proposed that a new committee should be introduced to deal with all University honorary awards (academic and non-academic) and also that another new committee would oversee OfS regulatory compliance and corporate governance matters in addition to the nomination function currently carried out by the existing Nominations Committee. There will also be amendments to the terms of reference of the Audit and Risk and the Resources Committees.

Mr Fisher confirmed that the proposed changes will conform with updated CUC guidance on best practice in governance in the HE sector. The next Corporate Governance Statement will reflect the proposed changes if approved.

Finally, Mr Fisher asked individual Board members to contact either Dr Livesey or himself if the role of 'Board Champion' for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion was of interest.

Resolved: That the corporate governance update be noted.

(ii) Climate Change

Mrs Lloyd reported on her involvement in Chapter Zero ('the Directors' climate change forum'). She commented on the rate at which interest in the movement was growing and also on the benefits (including taxation benefits) which positive responses - including in universities - can produce.

Mr Hext reported on his own work and involvement on climate change in Hong Kong and he undertook to distribute details to Board members.

Professor Baldwin confirmed that the ongoing Strategic Plan discussions included consideration of environmental issues.

(iii) Covid Lockdown - Students at Christmas

Mr McQueen alerted the Board to news of an apparent decision by the Government which would affect the freedom of students to leave universities to return home for the Christmas holidays.

In noting this news, it was also noted that the Minister to whom the remarks were attributed seemed less than emphatic in his expression of the possibility of this line of action actually being applied.

(iv) Graduation Ceremonies in December 2020

In responding to Dr Gurjee's question about plans for Graduation celebrations, Mrs Connor outlined the plans for alternative arrangements, given that the traditional 'full ceremony' type of event seemed most unlikely this year. Some degree of campus use (under strict Covid safeguarding conditions) was being contemplated, for example, to allow photographs, and close consultation with the Students Union continued.

UB868. Date and Time of Next Meeting

The next Board meeting will be on Thursday, 26th November 2020, on the rising of the Foundation Board (details of timings to be confirmed).

The Chair confirmed, with considerable regret, that the format of the meeting will have to be 'virtual', it having been established that, because of the pandemic, there was no real prospect of holding the type of off-campus meeting/event usually arranged at this time of year.

I M Fisher
Clerk to the Board