

## **University Board Meeting (By MS Teams video conference)**

Minutes of a meeting held on 27<sup>th</sup> November 2020

### **Members Present**

Prof Richard Conder (Chair)	Chair of the University Board
Paula Alliston	Professional & Support Staff Member
Jim Andrews	Chief Operating Officer (COO)
Nick Beal	Independent Board Member
John Beswick	Independent Board Member
Alistair Brien	Independent Board Member
Prof Carol Clark	Senate Member of the Board
Annette D'Abreo	Independent Board Member
Karima Fahmy	Independent Board Member
Dr Lois Farquharson	Academic Staff Board Member
David Furniss	Independent Board Member
Karl Hoods	Independent Board Member
Stuart Jones	Independent Board Member
David Kane	Independent Board Member
Jean Lang (Deputy Chair)	Independent Board Member
Naomie Lebe	President, Students' Union at Bournemouth University
Sara Luder	Independent Board Member
Prof Tim McIntyre-Bhatty	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (DVC)
Tola Oloyede	Independent Board Member
Des Pullen	Independent Board Member
Prof John Vinney	Vice-Chancellor (VC)
Deborah Ward	Independent Board Member

### **In attendance**

Jacqui Brasted (JB HE Consulting, Observing); Geoff Rayment (Committee Clerk), David Reeve (Interim Director of Finance (IDoF)), Deborah Wakely (Clerk to the Board)

#### **1. Welcome, Apologies and Declarations of Interests (Chair)**

20/161 The Chair welcomed all Members and attendees and explained that, due to the volume of business and timing issues relating to the finalising of the annual financial reports, this Board meeting had been effectively split into two parts, with the remaining items being scheduled for the extraordinary Board meeting on 18th December. He thanked all Members for making extra time for this in their diaries, as well as the extraordinary FRC and ARG meetings which had been convened on 7<sup>th</sup> December.

20/162 There were no apologies and no new or relevant existing declarations.

## **2. Minutes of Previous Meetings**

### **2.1. Minutes of the University Board Meeting, 2 October 2020 (Chair)**

20/163 The minutes were **approved** as an accurate record subject to the deletion of the sentence 'Other factors, such as research funding was currently a red risk, but had not been raised in the responses' from minute 20/128.

### **2.2. Matters Arising and Actions Register (Chair)**

20/164 The Actions Register was **noted**. Ongoing actions 165 (information on fundraising) and 166 (reporting the critical mass diagrams to FRC) would be picked up in due course, and items 167 and 168 were dealt with in the Mills and Reeve report on the banking agreement included in the papers for item 4.1 and 4.2.

## **3. Context Setting and Update Reports**

### **3.1. VC's BU Update Report (VC)**

20/165 The VC presented his update and outlined the key elements of the ongoing Covid-19 response. He had been impressed by the response from staff across the organisation. The successful move to online learning had been a massive challenge, as had the establishment of mass Covid testing facilities. Government guidance was continuing to change on a daily basis but the University Leadership Team and the Major Incident Group were performing well. The 'people first' approach was continuing, and the Christmas closure period had been extended to commence on 18<sup>th</sup> December with any staff having to work during that period being compensated with double the equivalent annual leave allowance.

20/166 The COO added that face to face teaching was scheduled to end on 9<sup>th</sup> December followed by on-line tuition only until the semester ended on 18<sup>th</sup> December. The University had surveyed students to gather information on their plans for staying on campus or returning home. Approximately 1600 had responded and around 1/3 of those in halls of residence had returned home at the start of lockdown. Data on wi-fi in halls confirmed this level of usage reduction. Most would subsequently return home for the Christmas break with approximately 200 expected to remain locally – a similar number to previous years.

20/167 The mass testing facility had taken a tremendous effort to set-up and would cover students from the Arts University Bournemouth and the International College as well as BU itself. The process had a strong legal/regulatory and insurance framework. Staff volunteers were helping to implement the process and SUBU and the Unibus company were also supporting the initiative. It was anticipated that testing would be required again in January when students returned, subject to further Government guidance.

20/168 Members asked if any financial contribution was being provided by the Government to cover the costs of the mass testing. The COO explained that all costs were being tracked and that most testing equipment had been provided to the University. Some staffing costs were covered for specific roles and others were being taken up by volunteers. AUB were also contributing. Guidance on what could be claimed was continuing to change and total final figures were not yet available, however the University would ensure that it recovered as much as it could. There were no plans to issue accommodation rebates at present. Accommodation remained open and in use by students.

20/169 On Covid case numbers, the COO advised that there had been no cases in the past 7 days and student numbers had fallen although it was expected that these would increase again when mass testing commenced. Local press representatives had been invited to view the testing facilities.

20/170 On external developments, the Government's spending review had contained little on Higher Education, with nothing on the Augar review or Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF). Discussions were again taking place regarding the possible introduction of post-qualification admissions.

20/171 The Board **noted** the VC's report and the Chair thanked the leadership and all staff members for their efforts in responding to the Covid pandemic and also the additional work to improve the University's financial position.

### 3.2. Board Appointments (Chair)

20/172 The Chair presented proposed Board appointments on the recommendation of the Nominations Committee as follows:

*Mrs Alliston withdrew from the meeting.*

20/173 The Board **approved** Paula Alliston's second 3-year term of office, from 2nd December 2020.

*Mrs Alliston rejoined the meeting and Miss D'Abreo withdrew.*

20/174 The Board **approved** Annette D'Abreo's appointment to the Remuneration Committee from 1st March 2021 to 1st August 2022 (at the end of the appointment term of the co-opted independent member, Jo Grunwell).

*Miss D'Abreo re-joined the meeting and Ms Fahmy withdrew.*

20/175 The Board **approved** Karima Fahmy's appointment as Deputy Chair of the Audit, Risk & Governance Committee (ARG) from 1st June 2021 (replacing Nick Beal, when his second term of office ended at the end of May 2021).

*Ms Fahmy re-joined the meeting.*

### 3.3. Chair's Actions, Written Resolutions and Use of the Seal (Chair)

20/176 The Board **noted** the report.

## 4. Strategic and Financial Matters

### 4.1. Additional Banking Facility (IDoF)

20/177 The IDoF presented this paper and confirmed that final draft documentation had now been agreed [Redacted]

20/178 to 180 [Redacted]

20/181 Mr Furniss, as FRC Chair, confirmed that the Committee had also considered the legal advice on the new RCF and were content to recommend it to the Board, particularly as the University's reserves remained very low. The facility was good value [Redacted]. It was felt to be in the best interests of the University and consistent with the Board's fiduciary duties.

20/182 The Board **noted** the financial and legal advice and **approved** the £[redacted] Revolving Credit Facility and **passed** the resolutions appended to these minutes. The Chair of the Board would sign the minutes extract containing the resolutions at the conclusion of the meeting.

## 5. Academic and Student Experience Matters

### 5.1. Annual Report on the Activities of Senate (VC and Prof Clark)

20/183 The VC explained that this report and the Academic Quality report and Degree Outcomes Statement that followed, were the main sources of evidence and assurance for the Board that the OfS ongoing conditions of registration related to academic standards were maintained.

20/184 The report contained a lot of detail on activities over the year, but the three key topics highlighted by the VC were the introduction of on-line teaching in response to Covid restrictions, the production of the new Degree Outcomes Statement (see Item 5.3 below), and the approval of new Level '0' Foundation programmes – a new type of provision for BU and possible area of future growth.

20/185 The Chair invited Prof Clark to comment as Senate member of the Board. She agreed that the Foundation Degree programmes had been a success and the result of great collaborative efforts across Faculties – such as for the Foundation Science Degree. They also promoted inclusivity by providing another route into university education. Prof Clark also highlighted the fantastic efforts which had gone into developing the Emergency Assessment Regulations. This had required rapid changes, particularly in terms of practical assessments, and staff had shown great creativity and flexibility. The opening of both the Poole Gateway and Bournemouth Gateway buildings had also been very well received and staff were very enthusiastic about the new facilities. The COO added that he hoped to be able to arrange tours of the Bournemouth Gateway Building for small groups of Board members at an appropriate future point.

20/186 The Annual Report on the Activities of Senate was **noted**.

### 5.2. Annual Academic Quality Report 2019-20 (DVC)

20/187 Before inviting the DVC to present this report, the Chair noted that ARG had considered the report at its 23 October meeting and invited Mrs Lang to comment. She referred Members to the minutes of that meeting (agenda item 6) which recorded their discussion of degree outcomes. The Committee had noted that the Faculty of Media and Communications (FMC) was significantly above both the sector average and other Faculties in respect of its % good honours awarded. The DVC had explained the reasons for this and the action taken, noting that the figures had now plateaued.

20/188 The DVC presented key points of the report which had been restructured this year to better align to the OfS conditions of registration. He highlighted the positive outcomes from external examiners' reports and the high levels of accreditation from Professional, Regulatory and Statutory Bodies (PSRBs) such as the National Midwifery Council. A separate annual report on student appeals and complaints would be submitted to a subsequent Board meeting, but in the meantime the data was being closely monitored and the numbers were currently lower than for previous years.

20/189 On the question of FMC's degree outcomes, the number of good honours (Firsts and 2.1s) had increased but then plateaued for the past two years. The reasons for this were set out in the report and primarily related to changes in assessment methods. Members asked whether the University was vulnerable to accusations of grade inflation. The DVC explained that the figures had now stabilized following a peak 2 years ago. BU was above the sector average in terms of good honours, but was not near the top of the list and not an outlier. When looking at first class honours only, the University was in the lower quartile. In addition, the external examiner system showed no signs of a grade inflation issue, with 100% of their reports agreeing that standards were set appropriately.

20/190 The Board **noted** the Annual Academic Quality Report.

### 5.3. Degree Outcomes Statement (DVC)

20/191 The DVC introduced the draft Degree Outcomes Statement which was being presented to the Board

for approval on the recommendation of ARG. It had also been approved by Senate. This was a new return which had arisen from an OfS report which showed that the number of first class honours degrees had increased between 2010 and 2018 and OfS considered the increase to be 'unexplained'. In parallel the UK Standing Committee for Quality Assessment (UKSCQA) with Universities UK (UUK), GuildHE and the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) published a 'Statement of Intent' which recommended that institutions produce a Degree Outcomes Statement by the end of the 2019/20 academic year in order to assure themselves that they are meeting the expectations of the Quality Code, and the OfS ongoing conditions of registration (B4 and B5) relating to protecting the value of qualifications. Guidance on completing the Statement had also been published.

20/192 BU indicators throughout that period covered by the OfS report indicated BU standards are robust, and comparable with those in other institutions as confirmed by External Examiners and evidenced in the annual reports on quality and standards. The Academic Standards and Education Committee also received an annual report to benchmark outcomes against previous years and sector results.

20/193 The report showed that the attainment gap at BU had reduced. The attainment of Home Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) students has improved, with 69% now achieving a First or Upper Second compared with 63% in 2014/15. The gap between Home BAME students' attainment and overall attainment has closed from 15% to 11% over the same period.

20/194 The Degree Outcome Statement was voluntary but there was an expectation that Institutions would publish their statements and all universities were understood to be participating. An action plan to strengthen monitoring of student outcomes had been produced. These actions included a review of the Assessment Regulations, to focus on how progression was supported and how areas of assessment board discretion were managed. Internal policies and procedures would also be reviewed to support effective internal moderation, including effective benchmarking and ensuring that awards held their value. ARG did not recommend that the action plan be published, to avoid setting a precedent for future years. The Action Plan would be monitored internally and reported on.

20/195 The Board **noted** the assurances regarding how the University maintained the standards of its awards and **approved** the Degree Outcomes Statement.

#### **5.4. Annual Report on Partnerships (DVC)**

20/196 The DVC introduced this report which was prepared in accordance with the CUC's HE Code of Governance. The revised version of the Code required the Board to receive assurance that specific academic risks (such as those involving partnerships and collaboration) were being effectively managed. The Code also stated that the Board had overall responsibility for decisions that might have significant reputational implications for the institution's sustainability (including partnerships or collaborations) and that, "... partnerships... must not inappropriately influence the institution's independence, mission or academic integrity".

20/197 The University generally did not enter into high risk academic partnerships. The separate annual report on Senate activity (above) contained details of international and FE College academic partnerships. There were currently no overseas partnerships with significant institutional level risks. The report also covered a small number of potentially high-risk commercial partnerships including high value contracts.

20/198 Members enquired whether there were many proposed partnerships which the University had decided not to pursue. The DVC did not think this was an issue as there were good examples of high value/high risk partnerships which had been progressed and evaluated. It was not felt that the approval process prevented the University from taking up opportunities. The COO agreed, adding that the system worked well in terms of filtering out partnerships which were not right for BU.

20/199 The Board **noted** the report and the assurances regarding the management, control and oversight of high risk partnerships.

## **6. Policy and Operational Matters**

### **6.1. Review of Anti-Bribery Policy & Procedures (COO)**

20/200 The COO presented the updated Anti-Bribery Policy & Procedures which contained only minor amendments. The annual review of the hospitality registers had been undertaken in accordance with the Policy and, as expected, there had been a reduction in the number of hospitality declarations due to Covid restrictions curtailing many activities. ARG had considered the Policy and Procedures and recommended them to the Board.

20/201 The Board **approved** the Anti-Bribery Policy & Procedures.

### **6.2. Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech (COO)**

20/202 The Board noted the report and updates to the Code of Practice including enhanced reference to online events. ARG had also considered the Code of Practice and recommended it to the Board for approval. The Chair asked if there had been any no-platforming incidents at BU. The COO explained that the University's approach was to avoid preventing any controversial discussions. The University worked with SUBU on any designated activities to enable events to proceed in a safe and legal way rather than cancel them. An appeal process was also in place in the event of objections. The Board had oversight of appeals as they were to be sent to the Clerk to the Board and none had been received.

20/203 The Board **approved** the Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech.

### **6.3. Modern Slavery Statement (COO)**

20/204 The Board **approved** the Modern Slavery Statement which was reviewed and updated annually and had been recommended by ARG for approval.

## **7. Committee Reports**

### **7.1. Finance & Resources Committee (9 October 2020) (Mr Pullen)**

20/205 The minutes were **noted**.

#### **7.1.1. Management Accounts and Cash-flow (IDoF)**

20/206 The Management Accounts were **noted**.

#### **7.1.2. FRC Terms of Reference (Mr Pullen)**

20/207 The Terms of Reference were **approved**.

### **7.2. Audit, Risk & Governance Committee (23 October 2020) (Mrs Lang)**

20/208 The Chair of ARG, Mrs Lang, drew Members' attention to the Committee's consideration of the External Audit Report which confirmed that there were no matters to bring to the University's attention (pending completion of the going concern review). On the internal audit report, one high risk recommendation had been identified [redacted]. The minutes were **noted**.

#### **7.2.1. Risk Register (DVC)**

20/209 The Risk Register was **noted**. The COO confirmed that, in respect of Covid related staff risks, the Pulse survey had been undertaken and the results shared with staff on the staff intranet (signposted via his

regular update e-mails) and also with the Finance & Resources Committee and the Trade Unions.

**7.3. Nominations Committee (16 July 2020) (Prof Conder)**

20/210 The Minutes were **noted**.

**Nominations Committee Terms of Reference (Prof Conder)**

20/211 The Terms of Reference were **approved**.

**7.4. Senate (10 June 2020) (VC)**

20/212 The Minutes were **noted**.

**8. Any Other Business**

20/213 Members noted that there was no SUBU President's report on the agenda and it was confirmed that this was on the agenda for the 18<sup>th</sup> December extraordinary meeting.

**8.1. Date of Next Meeting:**

Extraordinary Meeting, Friday, **18th December 2020**, 9.00am to 12.30pm by MS Teams.

Friday, **12th February 2021**, 9.00am to 12.30pm, by MS Teams