

University Board Meeting

Minutes of a meeting held on 7 July 2023

Members Present

David Furniss (Chair)	Chair of the University Board
Jim Andrews	Chief Operating Officer (COO)
Paula Alliston	Staff Member, Professional and Support Services
Nastassia Asselin	Student Member
Omuwa Ayomoto	President, Students' Union Bournemouth University
Prof Carol Clark	Staff Member, Senate
Karima Fahmy (Deputy Chair)	Independent Board Member
Dr Lois Farquharson	Academic Staff Member
Maggie Frost	Independent Board Member
Nick Golding	Independent Board Member
Karl Hoods	Independent Board Member
Simon Jackson	Independent Board Member
Stuart Jones	Independent Board Member
Sara Luder	Independent Board Member
Anthony Murphy	Independent Board Member
Susie Reynell	Finance Director (FD)
David Smith	Independent Board Member
Prof John Vinney	Vice-Chancellor (VC)
Deborah Warman	Independent Board Member
Robert Williams	Independent Board Member

In attendance

Prof Keith Phalp (Pro Vice-Chancellor, Education and Quality); Chike Dike (SUBU President Elect); Deborah Wakely (Clerk to the Board); Jane Meredith (Senior Governance Manager); Geoff Rayment (Senior Governance Manager).

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

22/237 Apologies were noted from Deborah Ward. The Chair welcomed SUBU President Elect Chike Dike who was observing. The Chair confirmed that the meeting was quorate and there were no new or relevant declarations of interests. Board Members would withdraw from the meeting during the item on Board appointments to ensure that they were not in the meeting when their own appointment was considered. Similarly, SUBU representatives would withdraw for a decision to be taken on items 5.7 and 5.8.

2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

2.1. Minutes of the University Board Meeting, 19 May 2023 (Chair)

22/238 The minutes of the previous meeting were **approved**.

22/239 Further to the approval at the May Board of the delivery of the Talbot Campus Heat Decarbonisation Project (item 5.15 in the minutes) the COO reported that the submitted tenders were in excess of [Redacted] over budget. Other awardees of grants from Salix were believed to have returned the money as the projects were unaffordable. The FD added that the University was not finally committed to the higher budget and could withdraw. A further update would be provided to the next Board meeting.

2.2. Matters Arising and Actions Register (Chair)

22/240 The actions register was **noted**, with most actions being completed, not yet due or covered under the substantive agenda items (below).

22/241 The VC updated Members in respect of action 209 (scenario planning in relation to a potential Labour Government). Details of the planning being done would be included in the September strategy discussions with a further update once the Labour manifesto had been published.

3. Context Setting, Updates and Chair's Reports

3.1. VC's BU Update Report (VC)

22/242 The VC highlighted key points of his update report, focusing on

- There had been several updates and announcements from Government ministers, OfS and opposition politicians. These would feed into the discussion around the new strategy where relevant.
- It was hoped that a deal would be signed shortly to enable the UK to re-join the Horizon scheme;
- The recently published NHS Workplan provided several opportunities and challenges for the sector to capitalise on the growth in training provision, particularly in the area of Nursing Apprenticeships;
- Applications currently showed a decrease in those for undergraduate courses but an increase in those for postgraduate taught courses. This was not causing the Executive any great concern at present;
- BU had risen in both the THE Impact Rankings and the Complete University Guide 2024;
- The bid, submitted under the UK-government funded programme, to enable the delivery of the Turing Scheme programme for international, outward student mobility activities, had been successful.

22/243 – 246 [Redacted].

22/247 Noting the investment Government was making in this area, a Member asked whether BU now had appropriate resources for future growth in this area. The VC noted that there were sufficient resources to support immediate growth and the situation would be kept under review in the longer term. A Director of Apprenticeships, who would report directly to the University Executive Team (UET), was being recruited to oversee this area.

22/248 Noting that ARG was keeping a close eye on the situation, the Chair requested an update in September both on the issues with current and former students and also with new entrants.

22/249 Members noted the 15% reduction in applications. The VC reported that this figure was roughly in line with 2021 and was of no immediate concern. However, if the trend of reduction continued it would become concerning. The University had opened its Clearing cycle early and had a strong offer as it still had accommodation available.

22/250 Members asked about the risks and opportunities arising from the NHS Workforce Plan. The VC agreed that this did offer opportunity for the University but numbers on some health related courses were

still capped and interest had reduced following a surge during the pandemic. Apprenticeships were expected to be where growth would occur in this area and the University was working with local Trusts. The main constraint was expected to be availability of placements and methods of creating realistic simulators for training were being investigated. The recent repositioning of a rival provider in this area was noted.

22/251 Members asked about the impact of ongoing industrial action on students. The PVC responded that the impact of the marking boycott was considered relatively manageable for the University at present. Some subject areas had struggled to find appropriate markers but these issues were relatively contained and significant delays in students receiving their results were not currently anticipated. The focus was on getting marks to students and facilitating resubmission Examination Boards. The situation was not currently considered reportable but would continue to be monitored. Significant delays, of over 2 weeks, would trigger a reportable event.

22/252 The Board **noted** the Update Report.

Action: Provide an update to the September Board meeting on the situation regarding Apprenticeship provision compliance for current and former students and the systems for new starts.

Action by: VC/COO

3.2. SUBU President's Report (SUBU President)

22/253 The SUBU President highlighted key points of her report:

- SUBU was anticipating a busy appeals season following the marking boycott;
- The summer Ball had been a great success with encouraging involvement from first year students;
- A record number of candidates had stood in the student elections with over three thousand students voting;
- The SUBU Advice Team was back to full strength and had handled more than 1500 cases so far in the current session;
- SUBU welcomed the new U5 direct bus service between Lansdowne/ Talbot campuses and Chapel Gate, which would run one-day a week from October 2023, to better connect students with sports facilities;
- SUBU had launched the Big Give 2023 with a new charity partner, Prama Care, who would conduct street collections to enable donations from students living in private rented accommodation.

22/254 [Redacted]

22/255 Members expressed their gratitude for the work that SUBU did in supporting students particularly first year students settling in to the University and students going through the appeals and complaints processes. Ms Alliston also noted that SUBU was actively reaching out to cultural societies in order to involve them in planning with the aim of increasing student engagement with on-campus activities.

22/256 The report was **noted**.

3.3. Chair's Reports

3.3.1. Chair's Action, Written Resolutions, Use of the University Seal, Contracts signed and Previous Approvals (Chair)

22/257 The report was **noted**. An update was provided on the Chapel Gate Football Foundation Bid. The majority of construction contracts had been signed the previous day with one outstanding, relating to the changing facilities, which was expected the following week.

3.3.2. Board, Committee and Chancellery Appointments (Chair/Clerk)

Mr Jones withdrew from the meeting.

22/258 The Chair noted that work was ongoing to fill Board and PVC vacancies. The Board **approved** the recommendation that Stuart Jones' third term as a Board member be extended for a further year.

Mr Jones re-joined the meeting.

22/259 The Board **approved** the following recommendations (subject to completion of updated due diligence):

- a) The renewal of the appointment of the Chancellor, Dr Kate Adie, DL to 31st December 2026.
- b) The renewal of the appointment of Pro Chancellor Emma Egging to 31st December 2026.
- c) The renewal of the appointment of Pro Chancellor Ann Abraham to 31st December 2024.

4. Strategic Matters

4.1. Key Performance Indicators (VC)

22/260 The VC introduced this report and the following were highlighted:

- Challenges remained around continuation although key roles were helping in this area;
- Student/Staff Ratio remained relatively static with a small decrease. The ambitious target was not going to be met and it was noted that the ratio was increasing across the sector although the average remained lower than at BU.
- Research and Knowledge Exchange income remained a major focus. The pipeline was stronger but significant challenges remained. Work was underway to position Professors as academic leaders and an away day with the Professoriate had been positive. The anticipated re-joining of the Horizon scheme was also expected to help.
- The Gender pay gap also remained a challenge as it was spread across the pay range. The University was working to attract more males to Professional Services and to offer career development opportunities and flexible working. The Gender Pay Reporting and action plan, considered by FRC, would be made available to the Board.
- The slight fall in entry standards was being monitored. The type of qualifications a student entered with appeared to be a factor in their success. Hidden exams also appeared to have an impact. Assessment plans were being reviewed along with the support available for student sitting examinations.
- Academic vacancies were not currently causing concern. The University was moving away from casualisation and was recruiting now in order to decrease the reliance on part time hourly paid staff in the next session.
- The percentage of students from the local area had surpassed the target which demonstrated the University's regional impact which would only be increased by Apprenticeship provision. Targets had not been changed during the life of the strategic plan but consideration would be given to resetting them during the life of future plans.

22/261 Members noted Action 211 (Benchmarking Data) and that the Board would receive an update on this in September.

22/262 The Board **considered and noted** the Key Performance Indicators.

Action: Provide the Gender Pay Reporting and action plan, considered by FRC, to the Board.

Action by: Clerk to the Board [Clerk's note – these papers are available to all Board Members for future

reference in the Information for Members folder in Admincontrol]

5. Financial, Operational and Governance Matters

5.1. Draft University Budget 2023/24 and indicative budgets for 2024 through to 2027 (FD)

22/263 The FD presented the draft budget for approval on the recommendation of the Finance & Resources Committee (FRC). The draft set out the proposed budget for next year, plus indicative budgets for the following 4 years and included the sensitivity analysis and baseline staff data requested by FRC. The Chair noted that, in approving the budget, the Board would also be approving the proposed increases in the SUBU block grant and in the BU contribution to BUCB. The discussion covered the following points:

- [Redacted]
- The Chair requested a discussion, at the September Board meeting, on how the initiatives being put in place were expected to improve recruitment and continuation for 2024/25.

22/264 The strategy of continued growth was questioned given the finite opportunities and changes to Government plans. It was noted that BU's market share had dropped and that increases to overseas recruitment would only bring numbers in line with other institutions. The concerns raised by Universities UK (UUK) regarding growth in international students without equivalent growth in home, undergraduate numbers was noted along with the changing expectations of 18 year olds and the changing way that they made their applications to university.

22/265 The Board **approved** the budget for 2023/24 and **considered and noted** the indicative budgets for 2024/25 to 27/28.

22/266 The increased BU contribution, of [Redacted] per annum, for BUCB, beyond the original 10-year plan, and the SUBU block grant of [Redacted] in 2023/24 were also **approved**.

Action: Review the 2024/25 indicative budget at October FRC before submission of the financial forecasts to OfS.

Action by: FD

Action: Discussion, at the September Board meeting, on how the initiatives being put in place were expected to improve recruitment and continuation for 2024/25.

Action by: VC/PVC

5.2. Reserves Policy Annual Review (FD)

22/267 The updated Reserves Policy had been recommended by FRC for approval. The Chair noted that the Reserves Policy was historically delegated to FRC, however, due to the relevance to going concern, it was being presented to the full Board for approval. The FD noted that changes related to redrafting and clarification and that there were no material changes being made.

22/268 The Board **approved** the Reserves Policy.

5.3. New 5-year Lease on the Executive Business Centre (COO)

Commercially confidential

22/269 [Redacted]

22/270 The Board **gave approval**, on the recommendation of FRC, for the Director of Estates to proceed with the negotiation of a new 5-year lease on the Executive Business Centre to 21 October 2029, within the cost parameters of [Redacted] including VAT per annum, alongside an exploration of potential purchase with

the current owner including a right of first refusal for the benefit of BU if the current owner is agreeable.

22/271 The Board further **delegated** authority specially authorising the execution of any property or other related documentation that may be required by:

- any one of the COO and any other member of UET to execute any necessary documentation underhand; and,
- where such documentation is to be executed as a deed, any two of the Director of Estates, the COO and any other member of UET to witness the application of the seal on behalf of the University pursuant to paragraph 10.1 of the Instrument of Government.

5.4. Renewal of Talbot House underleases to the GP Surgery and Nursery (COO)

22/272 The University leased a plot from the Talbot Village Trust (TVT) which was due to expire on 20 March 2024. In November 2021, the Board approved the grant of underleases to two undertenants who operated a nursery and GP surgery for a period up to 20 September 2023 and 30 July 2023 respectively. The undertenants now wished to take new underleases up to the end of BU's current lease. This would ensure continuity of use, income and of important services while BU and TVT negotiated the terms of a new medium/ long term lease.

22/273 The Board **approved**, on the recommendation of FRC, the granting of two underleases relating to Talbot House.

- Firstly, in relation to the GP surgery with Talbot Medical Centre for a period from 1 August 2023 to 20 March 2024 (or a few days less) at an annual rent of [Redacted] and to execute the accompanying Agreement for Services.
- Secondly, in relation to the nursery with Bright Horizons Family Solutions Ltd for a period from 21 September 2023 to 20 March 2024 (or a few days less) at an annual rent of [Redacted] and to execute any accompanying Agreement for Services. Both underleases are to be on substantially the same terms as the current leases.

22/274 The Board further **delegated** authority specially authorising the execution of any property other related documentation that may be required by:

- any one of the COO and any other member of UET to execute any necessary documentation underhand; and,
- where such documentation is to be executed as a deed, any two of the Director of Estates, the COO and any other member of UET to witness the application of the seal on behalf of the University pursuant to paragraph 10.1 of the Instrument of Government.

5.5. Student Complaints and Appeals Annual Report (PVC/COO)

22/275 The PVC introduced this annual report, which had also been considered by the SQS committee on 8th June and recommended to the Board. The report covered the 2022 calendar year. SQS had noted an increase in appeals along with a decrease in the proportion upheld. This was believed to be due to a return to a standard application of the University's exceptional circumstances and academic appeals policies following a more flexible approach during the pandemic. The figures were also believed to be skewed by students with specific difficulties, such as those adversely affected by volatile currencies, for whom the appeals procedure was the only route left to them.

22/276 Concern was raised regarding the requests for mitigating circumstances to be taken into account for students suffering from mental ill health. It was noted that sufferers could be assisted in managing their symptoms but that unexpected flare ups could still happen. Student Representatives requested that the exceptional circumstances procedure be reviewed in this area. It was noted that other options, such as

further flexibility with extensions, were being considered to try to minimise the number of students forced to appeal through lack of other options.

22/277 The Board **noted** the report and the assurance provided.

5.6. Student Outcomes including Degree Outcomes Statement (PVC)

22/278 The PVC introduced the Degree Outcomes Statement which had been considered by the SQS Committee on 8th June and recommended to the Board for approval. In summary, the data remained largely static, with a below sector proportion of high awards overall. This would be seen as positive by OfS who was concerned about grade inflation.

22/279 The Degree Outcomes Statement was **approved**.

The SUBU President and President Elect withdrew from the meeting.

5.7. Review of Students' Union Code of Practice (Clerk to the Board)

22/280 The Chair introduced this item noting that the Code had been updated and additions had been made in anticipation of new Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom requirements that were coming into force. The Clerk to the Board reminded Members that production and revision of a Code of Practice for the Students' Union was a requirement on the University set by s.22 of the Education Act 1994. Amendments had been made, in anticipation of future statutory requirements, in close consultation with SUBU who had endorsed the final version.

22/281 The Board **approved** the Students' Union Code of Practice on the recommendation of ARG.

5.8. Review of SUBU Bye-laws

22/282 The Chair noted that an amendment had been made to the Bye-laws to reduce the number of Student Summits. The Board was also invited to delegate to ARG the approval of further changes to sabbatical officer roles, if required, in the Autumn.

22/283 The Board **approved** the SUBU Bye-laws, on the recommendation of ARG, and **delegated authority** to ARG to approve further changes to sabbatical officer roles, if required, in the Autumn.

The SUBU President and President Elect re-joined the meeting.

6. Committee Reports

6.1. Finance & Resources Committee (28 April 2023 and 9 June 2023) (Chair of FRC)

22/284 The minutes were **noted**.

22/285 The Chair drew Members' attention to item 20 in the minute of 28 April 2023 where FRC had approved the total project funding of [Redacted] for a one year extension of the contract with DHUFT for the provision of the Student Emotional Wellbeing Service pending a review of wellbeing support services.

22/286 When the business case was originally submitted, the NHS was unable to provide the final confirmed costs for 2023/24 but FRC had approved a fixed amount. Confirmation had subsequently been received that the final cost would be [Redacted]. The Board was invited to approve this amendment as the FRC minutes had been confirmed with the lower amount in them. UET had confirmed that the additional amount had been accommodated in the budget.

22/287 The Board **approved** a minor amendment to the FRC decision, as recorded in the April 2023 minutes, to increase the total approved funding to [Redacted].

6.1.1. Management Accounts and Cashflows (FD)

22/288 The Management Accounts including cashflows were **noted** having been considered at FRC.

6.2. Audit, Risk and Governance Committee (21 April 2023 (Chair of ARG)

22/289 The minutes were **noted**.

22/290 The Chair drew Members' attention to item 12 in the minute of 21 April 2023 where ARG approved updates to the Apprenticeships Safeguarding Policy. To ensure the Apprenticeship Safeguarding Policy was kept current, the Board was invited to agree a formal review date of October and to delegate authority to the Chair of ARG to sign off any urgent updates required to ensure currency with the updated Department of Education Guidance. It was noted that the October meeting of ARG would discuss this more fully and consider any further amendments required.

22/291 It was noted that Internal Audit had audited Apprenticeship provision and there had also been a full independent audit by an external provider which had reviewed every record. Further consideration would be given to whether a further audit, to provide assurance, should take place in the next academic session.

22/292 The Board **approved** a formal review date, for the Apprenticeships Safeguarding Policy, of 6 October 2023 and also **delegated** authority to the Chair of ARG to sign off, by Chair's Action, any urgent updates required to ensure currency with the updated Department of Education Guidance which would come into force on 1 September 2023.

6.2.1. ARG Risk Register (FD)

22/293 In response to Members' questions, the COO confirmed that:

- The QS outsourcing contract had now been signed off and was in place;
- All Business Continuity plans, relating to cyber security, had been tested internally and externally reviewed by JISC.

22/294 The following points were raised in discussion:

- Visa changes were the biggest challenge to recruitment of overseas students. A Member requested further information on the risk posed by the changes to visa rules rather than just the risk of non-compliance.
- Development of hybrid working continued with consideration being given to the needs of each individual team. Some areas were struggling with recruitment and it was hoped that an offer of some home working would help to attract staff. As technology progressed, things would continue to change in this area. The COO offered to circulate the paper on this subject recently submitted to FRC.
- Post mitigation risk continued to move upwards. ARG had discussed where to focus to reduce this movement. It was acknowledged that the external environment was one of high risk at present.
- It was also acknowledged that cyber security was considered from the viewpoint of 'when' rather than 'if' a successful attack would take place. The Business Continuity plan was therefore critical. BU had insurance in this area until 31 July and was negotiating a policy beyond that date which the COO would be liaising with the Chair of FRC about for out of committee sign off as delegated by FRC.

22/295 The Risk Register was **noted**.

Action: Provide FRC paper on 'ways of working' (formerly 'hybrid working') to Board Members.

Action by: Clerk to the Board [Clerk's note this paper is available to all Board Members in the Information for Members folder in Admincontrol for future reference].

6.2.2.ARG Terms of Reference (Chair of ARG)

22/296 The Chair noted that only administrative amendments were proposed along with the removal of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor role from attendance, for currency. The Board **approved** the ARG Terms of Reference.

6.3. Student Experience, Quality & Standards Committee (27 April 2023) (Chair)

22/297 The minutes were **noted**.

6.4. Senate

6.4.1. Senate Terms of Reference (VC)

22/298 The Chair noted that the Senate minutes were not yet available but that Senate Terms of Reference were presented for approval. The membership had been amended to reflect recent senior leadership changes and to provide the option to have up to two professorial representatives, to further strengthen professorial representation at Senate. The membership had also been updated to add a senior member of the Dorset Healthcare Trust in a similar arrangement to that of the University Hospitals Dorset NHS Foundation Trust.

22/299 The Board **approved** the Senate Terms of Reference.

7. Any Other Business (Chair)

7.1. Wallisdown Playing Fields lease variation

22/300 The Board **delegated** authority to UET to sign a variation to the lease between BU and BCP for Wallisdown Playing fields, to accommodate the siting of a BCP storage container, used to store grounds maintenance equipment and BU sports equipment. This had not come in the form of a business case via FRC due to the minor nature of the variation.

7.2. BUI: Fluvial Share Sale

22/301 The Chair advised members that a written resolution may be required regarding the sale of shares owned by the subsidiary BU Innovations Ltd. (BUI). BUI held shares in a former student's company as part of a historic student IP development. While studying at BU, a student had designed a flood barrier. BU had assisted in commercialisation, the company had been very successful, and BU had benefited significantly in the time since. The former student now wished to sell the company. The FD was comfortable that the price being considered was fair and reflected the value of the shares.

22/302 The Board **noted** that, if the completion of the sale of Fluvial proceeded, there would be the requirement to complete a written resolution within a week.

7.3. Development Review process

22/303 The Chair advised that he and the Deputy Chair had devised a refreshed process for annual development reviews for Members and would undertake the reviews, equally, between them. The forms, which were not onerous, would be circulated the following week for return by 31st July. UET would also have the opportunity to provide feedback. Teams meetings for members' reviews would be arranged between 1st August and 29th September. The process would be completed, with signed forms filed with the Clerk by 2nd October, and any follow-up actions coming to the subsequent Nominations Committee

meeting. Constructive engagement from Members was encouraged.

7.4. Artificial Intelligence

22/304 Noting action 219 (BU's policy position regarding AI), and that an update would be presented to SQS in the autumn, Members discussed the potential challenges of AI development, particularly the short term impact on assessment and longer term devaluation of knowledge. In future, emphasis would need to shift further towards skills development as knowledge would be freely available. Assessment had already moved away from majority exam room assessment towards methods that allowed the exploration of students' understanding of the subject area.

7.5. Thank You

22/305 The Chair thanked outgoing members Omuwa Ayomoto and Professor Carol Clark, who had both reached the end of their terms of office and wished them well in the future. He also noted the voluntary nature of Board membership and thanked all Board Members for their time and contribution throughout the year. He also expressed his thanks to the Governance Team for the support provided to him, the Board and its Committees.

22/306 There was no further business.

8. Date of Next Meetings

Friday 22 September 2023, 9.30am, Boardroom, Poole House

Friday 24 November 2023, 9.30am, Boardroom, Poole House