

**CONFIRMED**

## **BOARD OF GOVERNORS**

Minutes of the Board of Governors meeting held on Tuesday 31 January 2012.

**Present:** C Booy; G Camm (Chair); S Forbes; Dr M Hagen; Dr J Harrington; J Laycock; S Moore; C Offler; Professor P Olomoloyaie; Professor G Upton; G van der Lely; Professor S West.

**Apologies:** I Gray; S Mills; T Smallwood.

**In Attendance:** Professor P Gough; W Marshall; A Osborn (Clerk); J Rushforth.

### **G12.1.1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None received

### **G12.1.2 MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MEETING OF 29 NOVEMBER 2011**

*Paper G12/1/1 was received.*

The Board confirmed the minutes of the last meeting.

#### **G12.1.2.1** The Assistant Vice-Chancellor (Finance and Commercial Projects) informed Board that

- i. the credit rating of banks remained an ongoing issue. As a result a revised counterparty limit framework would likely be presented to the Board later in the year (minute 11.11.5.3 refers); and
- ii. following further consideration, the name of the new legal entity supporting the development of the international pathway college on the Frenchay campus would be "University of the West of England Bristol's international College" (minute 11.11.9.2 refers).

#### **G12.1.2.2** The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Resources, Planning and Infrastructure) updated the Board on a recent follow up internal audit of health and safety that had provided a substantial assurance rating. Additionally attendance at fire safety training had risen to 98.2% of eligible staff with the remaining staff largely accounted for.

### **G12.1.3 RESEARCH AT UWE AND THE EXTERNAL CONTEXT**

*Paper G12/1/2 was received.*

#### **G12.1.3.1** Governors received a presentation from the Pro Vice-chancellor (Research and Business engagement) outlining the national context of research including:

- i. a traditional concentration of UK research funding within red brick institutions which was opposed to the University Alliance position that excellent and world leading research should be funded wherever it occurs;
- ii. UWE's previous performance in the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) which found that thirty seven per cent of the University's selective submission was considered to be internationally excellent and a further forty two per cent as internationally recognised;
- iii. the RAE score for individual subjects was also major element within algorithms that underpin the various University league tables and that overall

a strong research profile enhanced the attractiveness of the University to staff and students, contributed towards professional accreditation of programmes and helped promote business engagement;

- iv. UWE was currently preparing for the next round of the RAE which would take place in 2014 and had been renamed the Research Excellence Framework (REF). The REF criteria placed an increased emphasis on the *impact* or practical application of research.

**G12.1.3.2** Professor Boddy further outlined the primary sources of research funding for the University:

- i. Quality Research (QR) funding from HEFCE determined on a formulaic basis and driven substantially by the RAE result. QR funding generated circa £6m income annually for the University and peaked between 2008/9 and 2009/10 but the formula had subsequently been adjusted, adversely, for the University. Whilst UWE's QR income was significant, some institutions received over ten times the amount awarded to UWE;
- ii. external funding accounted for approximately £11.3m of income and had potential reputational significance for UWE with prestigious awards from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Arts and Humanities Research Council. Was dependant on a relatively defined pool of staff to attract significant external funding, to mitigate this the University would seek to recruit new, senior, researchers and had improved its internal peer review system to increase the bid success rate;
- iii. finally the University invests circa £11.7m internally in research based upon the full economic cost of time that reported by staff as spent on research. Based on the transparent approach to costing (TRAC) model this cross subsidy exceeded benchmark comparators but had been reduced following amendments to PHD funding.

**G12.1.3.3** During discussion Governors noted that:

- i. research output was pivotal to the University's league table position and the criteria made it difficult if not impossible to be within the top fifty institutions without a solid research base;
- ii. UWE's strategic emphasis on delivering an excellent student experience required it to be selective in the research it invested in but that this should not detract from the University's commitment to research;
- iii. a selective approach to research should not detract from staff pursuing scholarly activities to ensure their teaching reflected the forefront of their field;
- iv. whilst a reduction in research would reduce the associated headcount, additional investment above the benchmark figure would be necessary in order to move into the top fifty;
- v. high quality research had always been heavily dependant on staff discretionary effort and as TRAC recognised this, the actual internal investment may be overstated. Similarly staff often do not distinguish between research and scholarly activity and this may also inflate UWE's internal investment as recorded by TRAC.

**G12.1.3.4** The Board thanked Professor Boddy for their presentation and subsequent discussion.

## ITEMS FOR APPROVAL

### G12.1.4 Single Equality Scheme

*Paper G12/1/3 was received.*

**G12.1.4.1** The Board welcomed the production of the Single Equality Scheme (SES) but noted that it posed a number of questions that would need to be addressed. In particular Governors expressed significant concern at the apparent difference in withdrawal rates and good honours degree performance between students from mixed white and black African background and other black backgrounds and those students from a white background. These differences were also reflected between male and female students with the latter out performing the former.

**G12.1.4.2** During discussion Governors noted that:

- i. the difference in performance between student performance often reflected their entry qualifications. Despite this UWE had an excellent reputation to *adding value* to students and there continued to be room for improvement;
- ii. it would be important to monitor the effectiveness of actions and that some of the themes from the SES should be utilised to enhance the 2013+ strategy currently under development;
- iii. Nominations and Governance Committee had also endorsed a diversity audit of the Board of Governors to inform the approaches to filling future Board vacancies.

**G12.1.4.3** Governors **approved** the Single Equality Scheme and requested that the Strategic Planning and Performance Committee (SPPC) engage with, and report back on, the concerns articulated by the Board on the different performance and withdrawal rates within the student body.

**ACTION: Clerk to arrange discussion at SPPC**

### G12.1.5 Students' Union Matters

*Papers G12/1/4 and G12/1/5 were received.*

#### G12.1.5.1 UWE Students' Union Constitution

The Board noted that the Student's Union's Articles of Association (constitution) had been amended to reflect the Union's incorporation as a private company limited by guarantee and not having share capital. This would:

- i. remove the personal liability of the trustees; and
- ii. require the University to utilise a more formal framework where funding and contractual arrangements existed between the University and the Students' Union.

The Board further noted that the University was assisting the University to form a separate trading company.

**G12.1.5.2** Governors **approved** the Articles of Association of the University of the West of England Students' Union.

#### G12.1.5.3 Students' Union Code of Practice

Subject to a minor amendment to reflect the Union's new legal status the Board **approved** the code of practice relating to University of the West of England's obligations under Section 22 of the Education Act 1994.

## **REPORTS**

### **G12.1.6 HEFCE Grant**

*Paper G12/1/5A was received.*

The Board noted the highlights of the Governments grant letter to HEFCE and that it would be further considered at the 27 February meeting of the Finance Estates and IT Committee.

### **G12.1.7 Chair's Report**

The Chair provided an oral update on activities since the last meeting and in particular congratulated the Vice-Chancellor on his appointment as Chair designate of University Alliance the Mission Group to which UWE belonged. University Alliance had a strong reputation within Government departments and other Higher Education stakeholders; the Vice-Chancellors term as Chair would undoubtedly raise the profile of the University.

### **G12.1.8 Vice-Chancellor's Report**

*Paper G12/1/6 was received.*

#### **G12.1.8.1** The Vice-Chancellor updated the Board on the recruitment of undergraduate students and noted that the University was fourteen percent down on applications for the current academic year (2011/12) but applications were up three per cent from 2010/11 application levels and outlined that:

- i. across the sector tuition fee levels have not been a determinate of recruitment performance;
- ii. performance across the institution was variable with high performing programmes bucking the trend and endorsing the Board's view that the quality of provision will be the critical factor as the sector enters the new funding regime;
- iii. the internal distribution of student number places had been designed to remove the numbers the University would lose as a result of the changes to funding from those programmes with a soft market;
- iv. widening participation did not appear to have been adversely affected and applicants from low participation neighbourhoods had increased;
- v. within the region the universities of Bath Spa, Bristol, Gloucestershire, and Plymouth were all down on applications;
- vi. the result of bids made by the University's partner Colleges, including Hartpury College had yet to be announced by the Funding Council while they were subject to appeal, despite this initial indicators were positive;
- vii. UWE would be allowed to recruit up to 4,600 undergraduate students in 2012/12 with additional unlimited recruitment of "AAB" students.
- viii. the funding picture looked to remain similar for 2013/14 with the HE Bill increasingly unlikely to be brought before Parliament which would reduce the need for the Government to expand the number of places available for allocation to other providers. Despite this pressure from FE providers would continue.

#### **G12.1.8.2** During discussion Governors noted that:

- i. mature student entry had edged in line with the national average, however the impact was not uniform across subjects;
- ii. whilst UWE was down on 2011/12 applications it was not a suitable benchmark given the surge in students seeking to avoid the higher fees;
- iii. modelling suggested that further efficiencies would be required to provide the surplus required by the Board in order to pursue a growth strategy. In addition to the ongoing implementation of the One University Administration (OUA) project, continuing pay restraint as emphasised within the HEFCE Grant letter would play an important part in supporting the University to achieve its financial objectives;

- iv. there was a growing consensus within Government and the sector that further discussion of “off quota” or sponsored student numbers would be necessary;
- v. the impact of post graduation work restrictions on applications from non-EU students would be offset by the development of the international pathway college;
- vi. staff commitment to delivering OUA changes and continuing service quality had been commendable and student reception of the changes had been largely positive;

**G12.1.8.3** Governors agreed that a further update on recruitment and anticipated funding position should be provided at the forthcoming away day.

**ACTION: Vice-Chancellor/Clerk**

**G12.1.9 Performance Development Review Completion Report**

*Paper G12/1/7 was removed from the agenda and was not discussed.*

#### **ITEMS TO NOTE**

**G12.1.10 Financial Monitoring Report**

*Paper G12/1/8 was received.*

The Board welcomed the report and noted that an updated report would be presented to the forthcoming meeting of Finance Estates and IT Committee.

**G12.1.11 New Years Honors**

The Board formally congratulated Malcolm Wharton CBE and Ruby McGregor-Smith CBE on the Honors awarded to them in the 2012 New Year’s Honors list.

**G12.1.12 Minutes of Sub-Committees**

*Paper G12/1/9 was received and noted by the Board.*