



## **BOARD OF GOVERNORS**

Minutes of the Board of Governors meeting held on Tuesday 22 May 2012.

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

**Apologies:** S Mills; S Moore.

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

### **G12.5.1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None received

### **G12.5.2 MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 31 JANUARY 2012**

*Paper G12/5/1 was received.*

The Board confirmed the minutes of the last meeting.

### **G12.5.3 STAFF SURVEY**

**G12.5.3.1** Governors received a presentation from the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Resources, Planning and Infrastructure) on the outcomes of the recent staff survey and noted that:

- i. the survey suggested that the majority of people found their work interesting with a high degree of autonomy, rated their local managers, were proud to work for the University and thought the remuneration and benefits were good.
- ii. despite the areas of strength there were three key areas which required further work by the Executive team, namely the visibility, trust and role of senior leaders, workload and communication;
- iii. although the results, coming at the end of a change programme, were not surprising the Executive were anxious to deliver tangible improvements for staff and had requested that all departments discuss the results and develop a local level action plans by the end of June;
- iv. the Executive team were seeking to enter into an open and honest dialogue with staff on the results of the survey.

**G12.5.3.2** The Chair highlighted that the survey had also been the subject of significant discussion at the Strategic Planning and Performance Committee and that the Staff Governor forum would also be used to explore the issues, in particular that of the visibility of senior staff.

**G12.5.3.3** During further discussion members noted that:

- i. the themes within the survey were consistent with other sources of information, but that it would be important to resurvey in the medium term;
- ii. there was no obvious correlation between staff survey results and NSS performance;
- iii. professional services generally scored better than faculties, but data had been shared at business level and good practice disseminated;
- iv. the length of service was correlated to attitudes expressed within the survey with longer serving staff more likely to respond negatively. However this may

be as a result of a perceived erosion of the psychological contract, particularly among academic staff;

- v. a large number of staff remained undecided on many of the issues. It would be important for the institution to understand how this segment felt in order to effect positive changes;
- vi. whilst the percentage of staff reporting bullying or harassment was of concern, it was significantly below the national benchmark figure;
- vii. the student Governor welcomed increased investment in communication with staff but highlighted that further investment in communications with students would also be beneficial.

**G12.5.3.4** The Vice-Chancellor reiterated that the Executive Team remained confident that progress could be made within relatively short timescales but that in order to deliver change they would need to be supported by staff engaging with the process. As part of this the University continued to look at its deliberative structures in order to encourage staff to take ownership of issues and their resolution.

**G12.5.3.5** The Chair thanked the Executive for their open approach to the discussion but highlighted that the Board would expect demonstrable improvements following the next survey.

#### **G12.5.4 Planning Outcomes**

**G12.5.4.1** Members received a presentation from the Vice-Chancellor which built on the discussions with Executive Deans during the March Away day. Following that session and ensuing planning discussions all four Deans had subsequently provided plans that:

- i. illustrated areas for growth;
- ii. identified how growth would be supported, nominally through the reduction of number on other programmes;
- iii. outlined the impact on the staffing mix within the faculty; and
- iv. provided a timetable for action.

#### **G12.5.4.2 Faculty of Arts and Creative Industries**

The Faculty would continue to develop its strength in practice led programmes delivered, where possible, in partnership with industry. As a result no growth was anticipated with development focused on increasing quality on existing programmes. A number of weaker programmes, predominantly humanities subjects, were being closely monitored and following a review in the autumn, once student survey data had been released, may be identified for closure.

#### **G12.5.4.3 Faculty of Business and Law (FBL)**

Numbers remained strong for both home and overseas students and the development of the faculty would focus on increasing the number of programmes with Professional and Statutory/Regulatory Body (PSRB) accreditation together with diversified delivery modes of programmes (e.g. distance learning, January start) as well as potential collaborations with other faculties.

**G12.5.4.4** Strong competition in the professional legal training meant that the faculty would refocus its offering in the field and as a result target the department with an EVS scheme over the forthcoming academic year. This would also allow the Faculty to further consider the student:staff ratio (SSR) mix which in some areas was sub optimal.

#### **G12.5.4.5 Faculty of Environment and Technology**

The Faculty would continue to review subjects to ensure they were appropriately aligned to the market and pursue potential cross-faculty collaborations. As part of this exercise the faculty would seek to rebalance the staffing mix within the faculty over 2012/13 through targeted EVS Scheme.

**G12.5.4.6** Faculty of Health and Life Sciences

The faculty was targeting growth in the environmental sciences, in particular where these could capitalise on existing partnerships such as those with the BBC and Bristol Zoo Gardens however this would be sensitive to the Hartpury offer in order to minimise internal competition.

**G12.5.4.7** To support this a number of smaller programmes will be wound down, including a number of foundation programmes, further programmes may be identified for closure from 2013 onwards following the publication of student survey results over the summer. The impact on staffing would be more fully known following decisions taken over the summer, however similarly to FBL the faculty would be seeking to reduce SSRs in some areas.

**G12.5.4.8** The Vice-Chancellor confirmed that where Faculties were proposing to rebalance their staffing mix through the EVS Scheme these would meet the same business case and payback requirements of previous rounds. In total the University sought approximately fifty staff to leave through the new round. Additionally the re-opening of EVS had been effectively trailed, through discussion of performance measures, by senior management and would not surprise staff. Alongside the opening of EVS the Executive would seek to highlight investment to address sub optimal SSRs.

**G12.5.4.9** The Board welcomed the outcomes of the planning round and in noted that they aligned with the Board's expectations of the educational character of the institution and noted that where programmes were to be closed the University would seek to support staff and honour its obligations to registered students.

**G12.5.5** **RISK MANAGEMENT**

*Paper G12/05/02 was received.*

**G12.5.5.1** The Chair of Audit Committee highlighted that the Board had ultimate responsibility for risk management, the routine monitoring of which it delegated to the Audit Committee. As a result the Committee sought to provide the Board with an overview of both the process and its consideration of the risks.

**G12.5.5.2** The Board welcomed the paper from the Audit Committee and confirmed that it was content, both with the process as approved by Audit Committee and the Committees' monitoring of risk management however it noted that it would welcome a narrative report of key risks as perceived by the Vice-Chancellor.

**G12.5.5.3** The Vice-Chancellor noted that the key risks were relatively dynamic as evidenced by the recent emergence of risks relating to the possibility of a negative outcome of an audit of the University's processes by the UK Border Agency together with the unpredictable risks that may arise as a result of student behaviour.

**G12.5.5.4** During further discussion the Board noted that:

- i. the impact of the change management process on staff morale would continue to be high, but that with the increasing marketization of higher education all programmes would remain under scrutiny and that change prevented complacency. However this represented a significant cultural change for staff and would require the psychological contract to be re-established;
- ii. previous Vice-Chancellors had routinely provided a "worry list" to the Board but it had been distinct to the risk management processes;
- iii. where other institutions had failed or were struggling there had been questions around their Board's engagement with business critical issues and risks;
- iv. one of the largest risks in the future would be failing to listen to the student voice, as a result the Board would need to continue to maintain sight of the impact of risks on students;
- v. the risk register was maintained online and would be made available to Governors.

**G12.5.5.5** The Board **agreed** that the corporate risk register would be considered at the main Board twice a year and narrative of key risks would be brought to the next meeting of the Group.

**ACTION: Vice-Chancellor/Clerk**

**G12.5.6 2013/14 Tuition Fees and Access Agreement**

*Paper G12/05/03 was received.*

**G12.5.6.1** Governors noted that under fee proposals would normally be considered by the Finance, Estates and IT Committee prior to being presented to the Board however the University would be required to submit its proposed access agreement, which also required the fee to be set, prior to its next meeting.

**G12.5.6.2** Members noted that the proposals represented a broadly steady state with undergraduate tuition fees remaining fixed at the maximum of £9,000 and the access agreement being slightly adjusted to reflect the requirements of the national scholarship scheme. The steady state was representative of emerging soft data which suggested that the fee had not been a deterrent and that the impact of the 12/13 access agreement could not possibly be assessed prior to a full year's operation. The Vice-Chancellor confirmed that the proposed fee level would mean the University continued to be excluded from bidding for numbers created via the core and margin model.

**G12.5.6.3** The Board **approved** the home undergraduate tuition fee of £9,000 and access agreement for the 2013/14 academic year.

**G12.5.7 Chair's Report**

The Board noted that the Committee of University Chairs had appointed a new Chair, Sir Nicholas Montagu, and that a piece of work had begun, potentially to revise the existing *Code of Practice and General Principles and Guide for Members of Governing Bodies*.

**G12.5.8 Vice-Chancellor's Report**

**G12.5.8.1** The Vice-Chancellor informed members that the:

- i. University had moved up five places in the Guardian League Table to number 54;
- ii. Executive had been engaged to determine a limited number of key priorities for action during the forthcoming academic year;
- iii. strategic plan refresh continued and students, staff and external stakeholders would be consulted to inform the proposals. The Board would also be closely sighted on emerging themes and the new plan would be accompanied by clear and measurable performance indicators;
- iv. Government had announced plans to extend the AAB core and margin model to allow unrestricted recruitment of ABB+ students. The impact of this change on UWE would only become clear once HEFCE had determined the equivalent qualifications which would fall within the boundaries of ABB+;
- v. University's recruitment remained within the anticipated ranges with the number of applicants firmly accepting offers from UWE up against the same point in the previous year. The greatest challenge to the University would be to manage potentially unpredictable applicant behaviour over the summer clearing period.

**G12.5.8.2.1** The Board received a brief presentation on the emerging academic vision for the University highlighting the changing HE environment and how UWE could seek to position itself within the market through a focus on the delivery of the academic offer and the student experience which, in itself, would increasingly unconstrained by the campus environment but extend to students' workplaces and homes.

**G12.5.8.2.2** To support this University would be seeking to invest in staffing, research and IT infrastructure as well as its estate. This approach to investment would be reflected in revised Masterplan proposals to be presented to the next meeting of the Board of Governors.

**G12.5.8.3** The Vice-Chancellor also updated Governors on changes to the Masterplan and noted that:

- i. Following a challenge earlier in the year from the Board, a revised approach to the Masterplan would come forward to the June meeting of Finance, Estates and IT Committee and the July Board;
- ii. The revised proposals would recognise the need for rapid investment in order to deliver an appropriate student experience within the new HE market;
- iii. As part of this revision it had become apparent that the previously sanctioned development of media facilities on Frenchay campus would be unlikely to be delivered on time and would potentially accelerate disposal of the Bower Ashton campus. At the same time Bristol City Council had announced proposals for the development of a creative industries enterprise zone near Temple Meads station. As a result the Executive had chosen develop the media facilities at the Bower Ashton Campus through grater space utilisation. This in turn would allow further time to consider the most appropriate physical location for the Faculty;
- iv. approximately 280 existing students had been affected by the revised proposals and the University continued to work with each on an individual basis to provide appropriate support;
- v. proposals for the disposal of the St Matthias campus would continue as previously discussed.

**G12.5.8.4** The Student Governor highlighted that although the support would be welcomed by students revising the approach had sent a negative message and questioned whether the Executive may have been over ambitious and not fully considered the risks to the students.

**G12.5.8.5** The Board agreed that the impact on the Students was the greatest concern but supported the Executive's decision in light of improved and increased levels of information. However members emphasised that Executive needed to develop greater certainty over the future of the University's Bower Ashton and Glenside Campus; investment in the interim should seek to address market needs but not preclude the decisions to dispose of them in the medium term.

**ACTION: Vice-Chancellor to develop and present revised outline plans**

**G12.5.9** **Board of Governors Calendar**  
*Paper G12/05/04 was received.*

Governors noted a number of dates would be further amended and the calendar extended in to the first quarter of the 2013/14 Academic Year.

**G12.5.10** **Vice-Chancellor's External Appointments**

Members noted that the Vice-Chancellor had been appointed as President of Business West and had been appointed to Chair a project team on the future of the North Bristol and Southmead NHS Trusts. Both positions were unremunerated.

**G12.5.11** **Minutes of Sub-Committees**  
*Paper G12/05/05 was received and noted by the Board.*

**G12.5.12 Any Other Business**

On behalf of the Board, the Chair, thanked Colin Offler the outgoing Student Governor for their dedicated approach to highlighting the student perspective and providing a strong, constructive challenge to the Executive and the Board.

**G12.5.13 Date of Next meeting**

10 July 2012, at the Watershed followed by dinner.