



BOARD OF GOVERNORS

MINUTES OF MEETING

A meeting of the Board of Governors held on Thursday 24 January 2019 at 5pm in the Waldegrave Drawing Room, St Marys University, Twickenham.

Present

Professor Edward Acton
Professor Francis Campbell – Vice Chancellor
Mr Jeff Cottle
Mr Dave Hartnett
Ms Claire McDonnell
Professor Anne Moran
Rt Rev Bishop Richard Moth - Chair
Mrs Kristen Pilbrow – Staff Governor
Professor Anthony Towey – Staff Governor

In attendance

Mrs Jo Blunden – Senior Director of People
Mr Andrew Boggs – Interim Director of Strategic Planning
Professor Jeremy Bradshaw – RDAP Scrutiny Panel Observer
Professor John Brewer – Pro Vice-Chancellor (Global Engagement)
Mr Andrew Browning – Clerk to the Board (Minute Taker)
Professor John Charmley – Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic Strategy)
Mr Richard Solomon – Finance Director
Mr John Unsworth – Chief Operating Officer

BoG 41/18 WELCOMES AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were apologies for absence from Noreen Doyle, June Mulroy, Richard Finn, Natalie Hobkirk and Ruth Kelly.

Jeremy Bradshaw was attending the meeting as an RDAP Scrutiny Panel Observer

BoG 42/18 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chair declared an interest as a trustee of St John's Seminary Wonnersh.

The members of the Board were reminded of their continuing duty to declare any interests to the Clerk.

BoG 43/18 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

29/18 - The Finance Director requested that the fourth paragraph of BoG 29/18 be amended to say:-

“...an improving financial trajectory over the next few years **climbing to** an EBITDA of 10% of income **by 2022/23.**”

Subject to the above amendment being made the minutes were **approved** by the Board.

BoG 44/18 MATTERS ARISING

29/18 – The Clerk advised the Board that the external auditors report could potentially be disclosed under the Freedom of Information Act although parts of it may be redacted if the University believed that it prejudiced its commercial interests. The Clerk said that the report may however be disclosed by outside agencies such as the OFS under the Act.

40/18 - 34 Clive Road is now on the market for £1.29m.

BoG 45/18 VICE-CHANCELLOR’S REPORT

Paper 1 refers

The Vice-Chancellor’s report covered the following matters:-

- i) Office for Students (OfS) Registration
- ii) Media Coverage and VIP Events
- iii) Press Interest
- iv) Recruitment Update
- v) Academic Board Report
- vi) Law School Launch
- vii) Senior Staff Appointments

The Vice Chancellor said that he believed that the OfS is still in a process of developing its culture. He informed the Board that following the reports of an HEI receiving a £900k bridging loan from the OfS the University had received queries from the press and internally from staff about whether St Mary’s had been the recipient of the loan. These queries had come about partly in consequence of the OfS stating that the loan had been made to a post-’92 University. The Vice-Chancellor had written to the OfS voicing his concerns about these disclosures and how their actions had led to a misleading impression being given about the University but had disappointingly not received a response.

The Board asked whether consideration had been given to issuing a statement to staff confirming the University had not been in the receipt of the reported loan. The Vice-Chancellor said that he believed that the issue had come up during the VC’s Reports. The Senior Director of People said that the issue had been mentioned in SMT and it was expected that the message would be cascaded. The financial position of the University had also been made clear in the Annual Report and the Annual Review.

The Vice Chancellor told the Board that the Waldegrave Room had undergone a refurbishment with an improved heating system and the wallpaper being repaired.

The Interim Director of Strategic Planning said that there had been an Op-Ed in the THE regarding higher fees for 2 year degrees which had name-checked St Mary’s. He said that the statutory instrument to enact this still needed to be approved.

BoG 46/18 VISION 2025 UPDATE

Paper 2 refers

This was presented by the Interim Director of Strategic Planning. The paper provided an update on the 2018/2019 FTE from the 1st December HESES return together with updates on the proportion of overseas and postgraduate students. The total 2018/2019 student FTE was 4469 which was a reduction of 162 FTE from the previous year and 94 below target.

The proportion of FTE from overseas had increased to 12% (+74 FTE). The proportion of postgraduate taught students had increased to 13%. There were now 594 taught postgraduate students which was an increase of 101 FTE.

The Board **noted** the update.

BoG 47/18 STUDENT RECRUITMENT UPDATE

Paper 3 refers

This was presented by the PVC (Global Engagement). The UCAS window for applications had closed on 15 January and in the days leading up to this date there had been a flurry of applications. Overall there had been 4417 application compared 4430 from last year. The University was 0.3% below the number of applications from last year, the sector average was 0.6% down and the University's competitor group was 5.6% down. The PVC (Global Engagement) said that he felt that this was positive news particularly when compared to the position that the University had been in eight weeks ago.

The PVC (Global Engagement) Said that around 70% off applications were made before the UCAS application window closed. There were likely to be around a further 10% - 15% being made after the window closed with the remaining proportion being made through clearing.

The PVC (Global Engagement) said that conversion was now key and the University needed to be proactive in its engagement with applicants. The first applicant open days would be taking place next week.

The Board were told that the number of non-EU applicants had increased by 66% and that the number of EU applicants were holding up despite the uncertainties caused by Brexit. SMULIC has also had its first intake of students.

The Board asked what had caused so many last minute applications. The PVC (Global Engagement) said that in many cases schools would encourage these and the increase could be linked to the start of the school term.

The Board **noted** the report.

BoG 48/18 MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS

Paper 4 refers

The Management Accounts were presented by the Finance Director. He told the Board that EBITDA was favourable to budget with a surplus £1.2m which was £1.3m favourable to budget. This had come about due to a significant underspend on non-staff costs and lower run rate for staff costs in light of vacancy levels.

The cash position was positive at £6.6m being £3.3m ahead of budget. This was due to better than expected EBITDA performance, starting off the financial year with a better cash position than expected and the delayed phasing of capital expenditure. Tuition fee income was currently £557k adverse to budget.

The Board **noted** the Management Accounts.

BoG 49/18 INTERNAL REVIEW OF GOVERNANCE

Paper 5 refers

This was presented by Dave Hartnett. He told the Board that had considered the various reviews of governance that had been conducted as well as the audits of governance which are carried out by the Internal Auditors on an annual basis. He proposed that the following actions detailed in the appendix to the paper be carried out:-

- i) That there should be a meaningful discussion by the Board regarding the gaps that had been identified in the various skills reviews that had been carried out. A paper should be brought to Board with proposals and a timescale to address the issues. - **ACTION**
- ii) That the recruitment process for new governors should be sped up. - **ACTION**
- iii) That job descriptions for the roles of Vice Chairs and Chairs of Committees should be prepared. - **ACTION**
- iv) That performance discussions of governors should be reinstituted. - **ACTION**
- v) That there should be close monitoring of governors attendance with a record of attendance provided in the Board papers. – **ACTION**

BoG 50/18 STUDENTS UNION REPORT

Paper 6 refers

In the absence of the SU President this was presented by the Clerk. The report included data relating to student engagement.

The Senior Director of People informed the Board that a new CEO of the SU had been appointed and that she would be starting on 1 March 2019. She confirmed to the Board that the CEO is an employee of the University.

BoG 51/18 MODERN SLAVERY STATEMENT

Paper 7 refers

This was presented by the Clerk. The Board approved the Modern Slavery Statement and it would be put on the University's website – **ACTION**

BoG 52/18 ATTENDANCE MONITORING

Paper 8 refers

This was presented by the COO. He told the Board that the attendance monitoring system went live just before Christmas. It was intended to automate the process of recording student attendance and to assist the University in ensuring that students were receiving the necessary support.

To record their attendance students would “tap-in” using their student card on a device which was by the door. The system was to be used across all courses and the University was seeking to embed this. The measurement of successful usage of the system was an 80% attendance rating or higher. As the system had only recently been introduced the attendance levels in most courses were currently much lower than this level in part because students were not used to tapping in.

The Board asked what would happen with individual students who failed to attend. The PVC (Academic Strategy) said that the University would look to engage with those students. He said that the University was keeping an eye on the National Student Survey to see what feedback was given in relation to teaching and would be listening to student feedback generally so that teaching could improve.

The Board expressed their pleasure that the system had been implemented. The Board said that it was now a case of getting students to use it and for academic staff to encourage its use. The Vice-Chancellor said that these points had been raised at Academic Board. He said that a technical solution was now in place and it was now a case of trying to get it ingrained in the culture of the University.

It was agreed that there would be a further report made to Academic Scrutiny Committee when it met in June on the use of the system – **ACTION**

BoG 53/18 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Vice-Chancellor told the Board that he and the Senior Director of People met with some UCU and staff representatives to discuss some concerns they had about inappropriate comments made in team/formal meetings. The Vice-Chancellor said that he was aware of one case but issues relating to a former staff member were also mentioned as well as some second hand allegations about another staff member. Overall they were worried that these inappropriate comments might be the start of a small but growing culture which was not aligned to the University's inclusive values.

The Vice Chancellor said that the discussion was very constructive and many helpful avenues were explored. In his capacity of Vice Chancellor he apologised on behalf of the University for the inappropriate comments that were made and assured them that these had no place within St Mary's. Given the nature of the conversation he thought that it was important for the Governing body to be aware of their concerns and his apology.

BoG 54/18 VALEDICTION

The Board thanked John Brewer for his service at the University as the PVC (Global Engagement) and wished him all the best for the future.

BoG 55/18 DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS

28 February 2019 (Away Day)
16 May 2019
20 June 2019

END