

CONFIRMED

Minutes Board of Governors

5th meeting of the academic year 2018/19

Time and date: 10:00, Thursday 9 May 2019

Location: The Boardroom, Trinity House

Present: Ms L Hinnigan (Interim Chair), Ms S Bowie, Mr S Capper, Mr A Charlton, Ms J Ezard (by telephone), Ms M Footitt, Mr P McNicoll, Ms S Overton-Edwards, Dr V Patel (by telephone), Dr D Stevens, and Professor A Collop.

In attendance: Mr S Weston, Clerk to the Board of Governors,
Mr B Browne, Chief Operating Officer,
Dr S Oldroyd, Interim Deputy Vice-Chancellor,

Mr S Bradbury, Pro Vice-Chancellor/Dean of Arts, Design and Humanities (item 087),
Professor R Jaspal, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research) (item 084),
Mrs K Patel, Interim Pro Vice-Chancellor/Dean of Health and Life Sciences (item 085),
Mrs P Robson, Chief Executive Officer, De Montfort Students' Union (item 082).

Secretary: Mr N Jeffs, Assistant Clerk to the Board of Governors

073 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Mr S Cole.

074 Declaration of any pecuniary, family or other personal interests

Professor Collop made a standing declaration regarding members of his immediate family being enrolled as students at DMU.

075 Minutes of the previous meeting

075-BG190509-A
075-BG190509-B

The minutes of the Board of Governors' meeting held on 7 March 2019 were confirmed, alongside a redacted version proposed for broader publication.

076 Matters arising

There were no matters arising.

077 Interim Chair's update

The Interim Chair of the Board provided updates on two items:

a. Daily Mail article

An article had been published online by the *Daily Mail* on 6 May 2019 concerning the departure of the university's former Vice-Chancellor, Dr Dominic Shellard. A link to the article would be circulated to governors following the meeting.

b. Committee of University Chairs' 2019 spring plenary

The Interim Chair had received the minutes of the Committee of University Chairs' (CUC) 2019 spring plenary, which had taken place on 4-5 April. At the plenary, it was noted that the CUC had undertaken a review of its Higher Education Code of Governance. Contributions to the review had been encouraged from 'anyone with an interest in the reputation of the UK higher education sector'.

078 Report by the Interim Vice-Chancellor

078-BG190509-C

The Interim Vice-Chancellor (IVC) delivered an update concerning a number of recent university developments:

a. Staff engagement

Since the departure of the university's former Vice-Chancellor, the IVC and Executive Board colleagues had led an extensive programme of engagement and communications with DMU staff. This had been set in the context of promoting and encouraging greater transparency, trust, and conversation in support of a desire for continued stability, and positive change at the university. This activity comprised regular email updates to all colleagues, direct engagement with key staff groups, and the launch of a regular 'surgery' where staff could arrange a face-to-face meeting with the IVC.

These activities had revealed a number of common themes about which staff were concerned, including the need for a change of culture at DMU, leadership, financial management, policies and procedures, and pressures on academic staff. These themes had been discussed at a subsequent 'leadership conversation' event on 9 April 2019. This was the first in a series of events designed to establish amongst DMU's leadership and management a collective recognition and ownership of the issues that needed to be addressed. The Executive Board had already begun to make changes to the way in which it operated with meetings taking place more frequently, and the minutes of each meeting being published internally for staff to view.

b. Student numbers

Following a number of internal conversations regarding the future size and shape of DMU, it had been proposed that the university enter a period of stabilisation in terms of its student numbers. DMU had experienced a

number of consecutive years of unprecedented growth which, whilst not unwelcome, had placed increasing pressures on academic staff and the university's estate. The university would not, therefore, seek to grow substantially its student numbers beyond current levels in the short term.
[Redacted]

c. Moody's credit rating

Moody's had issued a formal credit opinion on 26 February 2019 confirming DMU's rating of 'Aa3 negative', which was unchanged since the previous year. In summarising its opinion, Moody's cited as DMU's strengths its unique market position, strong and improving student numbers, and its stable financial performance. Challenges were identified in terms of increased market competition and external policy changes.

d. Rates of non-completion amongst holders of Tier 4 visas

The university was taking steps to ensure that rates of non-completion amongst holders of Tier 4 visas at DMU remained within acceptable limits as defined by United Kingdom Visas and Immigration. These steps included regular monitoring of the university's non-completion rate, enhanced in-country credibility interviews for certain applicants, requiring a larger deposit from those confirming their intention to study at DMU, and having academic oversight of international admissions. Consideration would also be given to a refreshed approach to international student recruitment, including a review of two-year postgraduate programmes and that way in which the university utilised recruitment agents.

The update was noted.

079 Update on the Office for Students' investigation

The IVC and Chief Operating Officer (COO) provided the board with a verbal update regarding the progress of the Office for Students' (OfS) regulatory investigation into DMU. Further updates would be provided to governors as and when the situation developed.

The update was noted.

080 Financial viability and sustainability: information for governing bodies

080-BG190509-D

The IVC led a discussion concerning a letter from the OfS entitled 'financial viability and sustainability: information for governing bodies'. The letter outlined the OfS' concerns regarding higher education institutions' assumptions about future student recruitment and how these assumptions were being used to inform financial forecasts. It was noted that DMU's financial position was strong despite the potential difficulties facing other institutions across the sector, and that the university was not planning to increase significantly its student intakes for the 2019/20 academic year.

The letter from the OfS, and its annex, were noted.

081 Co-opted academic and professional services representatives to the Board of Governors

081-BG190509-E

The Clerk to the Board of Governors outlined a proposal to increase the level of staff representation on the board, specifically in the form of one elected academic representative and one elected professional services representative. The proposed approach would require changes to the university's Instrument of Government to permit elected staff representatives to serve as full members of the board. In the meantime, the elected representatives would join the board as co-opted governors, as described under paragraph 3.2.4 of the Instrument of Government, with the explicit commitment that they would become full board members once the Instrument had been revised.

It was intended that the existing staff governor, Mr Paul McNicoll, would complete his current term (ending in September 2020) after which point the board would proceed with only the two elected representatives. It was proposed that Electoral Reform Services would be engaged to run the election, thereby ensuring the independence, transparency, and integrity of the process. Following feedback from discussions with trade union representatives, it was proposed that the elections would be held in September 2019 in order to ensure that both academic and professional services staff were available to take part.

The proposal was approved.

082 De Montfort Students' Union election update

082-BG190509-F

The Chief Executive Officer of De Montfort Students' Union (DSU) provided an update on the election of union officers for the 2019/20 academic year. No issues had been identified with the integrity of the process this year and no complaints had been received regarding the union's revised bye-laws or the way in which the election had been managed. Five full-time and seven part-time officers had been elected, one of whom would ultimately be nominated by DSU to serve as the student representative on the board from July 2019 for 12 months.

It was suggested that the Interim Chair of the Board might meet with the newly elected officers to explore the potential for greater engagement between governors and DSU. It was also suggested that an independent governor should sit on the Trustee Board of DSU. Governors who were interested in joining DSU's Trustee Board would indicate this in writing to the Clerk's Office.

The update was noted.

083 Freedom of expression and academic freedom policy

083-BG190509-G

The COO introduced proposed revisions to the university's policies concerning freedom of expression and academic freedom, and external speakers. Governors welcomed the proposed revisions and commended DMU's approach to these issues.

The proposed revisions to the policies were approved.

084 Research Excellence Framework update

084-BG190509-H

The Pro Vice-Chancellor (PVC) (Research) introduced an update concerning the university's preparations for the forthcoming Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2021.

To date, these preparations had included conducting 'mock' REF exercises, which had helped to refine the number of units of assessment to which the university would be submitting outputs, and to highlight areas where impact case studies might require further investment. The university had also taken strategic decisions with regards to bolstering its academic staff, recruiting colleagues who were at an early stage in their career (under the VC2020 and Early Career Academic Fellowship schemes) as well as some more senior research leaders where it was deemed appropriate. Most recently, a Code of Practice had been drafted, which would outline DMU's approach to identifying staff with 'significant responsibility for research', and to selecting outputs for submission to the REF.

Future preparations would include analysing the outcomes of the most recent 'mock' REF, which had been launched in October 2018, and submitting the final draft of the Code of Practice to Research England by the deadline of 7 June 2019. Recruitment was currently underway for a Research Governance Manager who would provide leadership and operational support to the REF preparations, and it would be necessary to provide some investment to develop further impact case studies. [Redacted]

The update was noted.

085 The 'Freedom to Achieve' initiative

085-BG190509-I

The Interim PVC/Dean of Health and Life Sciences introduced an update concerning the 'Freedom to Achieve' initiative, the aim of which was to reduce at DMU the black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) attainment gap by an average of 2% per year.

During the first two years of the initiative, the BAME attainment gap had decreased from 10.5% to 8.9% across the 40 participating programmes. The activities that had helped to achieve this positive outcome included the recruitment of 'Fair Outcome Champions' to support faculties' engagement with the initiative, and a number of mass co-creation and programme-level workshops that had helped to support staff in creating culturally competent curricula. The Freedom to Achieve team had also helped to support the university's BAME-focussed mentoring programme 'Dare to Be', and had engaged with the Stephen Lawrence Research Centre to explore potential areas of collaboration. Future activities would focus on embedding further Freedom to Achieve into DMU's curriculum so that it would become 'business as usual'. In addition, the approach that the team had taken, and the outcomes that they had achieved thus far, would be disseminated to other higher education institutions in a bid to help improve practice across the sector.

Governors welcomed the work that had been done so far, particularly as the aims of the initiative were so central to DMU's vision, mission, and values, and reiterated their ongoing support. It was suggested that one potential avenue for future exploration would be to measure the attainment of BAME students post-graduation

although it was acknowledged that collecting data in this area might prove to be difficult.

The update was noted.

086 Prevent duty annual letter

086-BG190509-J

The COO introduced a letter concerning the outcome of an assessment by the OfS of the university's compliance with the Prevent duty. The OfS had determined that the university had 'demonstrated due regard to the Prevent duty', and that it was 'not at higher risk of non-compliance with Prevent'.

The letter was noted.

087 Update from the Faculty of Arts, Design and Humanities

The PVC/Dean of Arts, Design and Humanities delivered a presentation concerning his faculty, including an introduction to its academic portfolio and strategic priorities until 2023. The presentation also outlined proposed changes to the structure of the faculty that included the consolidation of the four existing schools into three. Governors welcomed the update and discussed a number of issues that had been raised by the presentation, including the potential for growth in the School of Fashion, the impact of the reduction in the number of 16-18 year olds studying creative arts subjects, and the potential impact on the faculty of the Augar Review.

The presentation was noted.

088-093 Items for noting

The various items were noted.

094 Any other business

Two other items of business were raised as follows:

a. Recruitment of a permanent Vice-Chancellor

The recruitment of a permanent Vice-Chancellor would begin following the completion of the OfS' investigation, and the appointment of a permanent Chair of the Board of Governors.

b. Mollie Footitt

This would be the final board meeting for Mollie Footitt, the student representative governor. Governors thanked Mollie for her contribution to the board over the past 12 months and for the professionalism with which she had carried out her role.

095 Date of the next meeting

The next meeting of the Board of Governors would be held in the Trinity House Boardroom, Leicester at 10:00 on Thursday 11 July 2019.

Signed by the Interim Chair of the Board:

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Date:

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