

Minutes:	Board of Governors
Time and date:	10:00, Thursday 2 February 2023
Location:	The Yard, rooms 3.02 and 3.05
Present:	Ian Squires (Chair), Peter Collyer, Fiona Cownie, Stuart Dawkins, Phil Grierson, Jonathan Kerry, Jonathan Mills (to item 94), Katie Normington, Buddy Penfold, Aashni Sawjani, Benjamin Smith (to item 95), Peter Tansley, and Dan Toner
In attendance:	Jim Bowditch (Acting Director of Estates and Facilities) (item 89), Simon Bradbury (Pro Vice-Chancellor International) (item 90), David Bryan (Director of Strategic Planning) (item 96), Pete Cross (Chief Finance and Resources Officer), Mel Fowler (Executive Director of Marketing and Communications) (item 97), Richard Greene (Deputy Vice-Chancellor), Tracey Jessup (Chief Transformation Officer) (item 94), Chloe Keenan (Governance Officer), Shushma Patel (Pro Vice-Chancellor Student Experience) (items 94 and 95), Nikki Pierce (Registrar (Academic) and Secretary to the Board), Harpreet Sandhu (Head of Legal Services) (item 90)
Secretary:	Nick Jeffs; nick.jeffs@dmu.ac.uk

CONFIRMED

82 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Catherine Clarke, Sardip Sandhu, Beverley Shears and Paul Woodgates. Apologies for early departure had been received from Jonathan Mills and Benjamin Smith.

83 Declarations of any pecuniary, family or other personal interests

Looking ahead to item 89, Jonathan Mills noted that, due to a potential conflict of interest with his role as Director General for Energy Supply at the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, he would be required to recuse himself from any discussion of government grants, in particular the Green Heat Network Fund.

No further declarations of pecuniary, family or other personal interests were made in respect of any items on the agenda.

The university maintains a Register of Interests, which records standing declarations of pecuniary, family or other personal interests from all members of the Board of Governors and the University Leadership Board.

84a Minutes of the 24 November 2022 meeting

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the 24 November 2022 meeting of the Board of Governors be approved.

84b Minutes of the 15 December 2022 extraordinary meeting

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the 15 December 2022 extraordinary meeting of the Board of Governors be approved.

85 Matters arising

142 Ofsted Self-Assessment Report and Quality Improvement Plan

Although the university's apprenticeships provision, and its Foundation Diploma in Art and Design, had recently been subject to an inspection by Ofsted, it was agreed that it would still be useful for governors to undertake training regarding the role they would play in future inspections.

All of the remaining matters arising [85] had been completed prior to the meeting.

86 Report from the Chair

The Chair of the Board delivered an update concerning a range of issues:

- i. Governors were reminded of their invitation to enjoy some refreshments in the students' union following the conclusion of the meeting.
- ii. The Chair thanked those colleagues who had been responsible for DMU's response to the recent Ofsted inspection, including those governors who had met with the inspectors.
- iii. The Chair thanked those governors who had given up their time to attend some of the university's winter graduation ceremonies.
- iv. The board would shortly be undertaking a recruitment exercise to bolster its membership in light of a number of recent and forthcoming departures.
- v. Independent governor and Deputy Chair of the Board, Fiona Cownie, would be stepping down from the board at the end of the 2022/23 academic year. It was noted that the process for identifying a new Deputy Chair of the Board would begin following any new appointments arising from the aforementioned recruitment exercise.

RESOLVED:

That the update be noted.

87 Report from the Vice-Chancellor

The Vice-Chancellor introduced a report [87] concerning a range of recent developments in relation to the university and the higher education sector as a whole. In addition, the Chief Finance and Resources Officer (CFRO) delivered a presentation concerning the university's current financial position. Arising from the discussion of this item, and questions from governors, the following points were highlighted:

- i. Following a competitive recruitment process, an appointment had been made to the role of Pro Vice-Chancellor for Research and Business Innovation. An announcement would be made in due course and it was expected that the appointee would take up their role at DMU in July 2023.

- ii. Governors were invited to attend DMU's 'Our University Day', which would take place on 8 March 2023. A written invite would be issued by the Governance Office in the coming days.
- iii. **[Redacted]**
- iv. It was acknowledged that the current rate of staff turnover was relatively high but that this appeared to be an issue across the sector. It was noted that DMU might be experiencing the issue more acutely as a result of recent institutional change.
- v. Domestic recruitment continued to be challenging, with a year-on-year decrease in the number of applications showing little evidence of the hoped for increase in the number of young people going to university as a result of the demographic upturn. Overseas recruitment, however, continued to be buoyant although it was recognised that this positive performance was not likely to be sustainable in the long term. It was suggested that DMU would need to be mindful of the impact that increasing overseas recruitment would have on the demographics of its student population in Leicester, and the board welcomed attempts to diversify the university's international activities via transnational education.
- vi. It was noted that the Deputy Vice-Chancellor would be leading of review of the university's postgraduate taught programmes with a view to identifying opportunities to bolster its portfolio with an offer that would, it was hoped, be more attractive to the market.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

88 Report from the student governors

The student governors delivered an update concerning a range of issues:

- i. The student governors thanked those colleagues who had supported the development of the students' union's submission to the 2023 Teaching Excellence Framework exercise.
- ii. Some students had raised concerns around the potential negative impact of University and College Union (UCU) industrial action on their experience. The students' union would continue its discussions on the subject with both DMU and UCU.
- iii. The annual elections for the students' union's sabbatical officers would be taking place in the coming weeks.
- iv. The students' union's Student Voice Manager was now in place.
- v. The students' union had welcomed the introduction of free breakfasts for both staff and students. Feedback on the scheme has been very positive so far, with over 500 free meals being served per day.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

89 Business case: central renewable heat solution

The Acting Director of Estates and Facilities introduced a business case [89] for the installation of an air source heat pump at DMU with the aim of decarbonising the heat generated across the university's central campus. In the absence of the Chair of the Finance and Performance Committee, the Chair of the Board also provided a verbal summary of the discussion that had taken place around the business case, both at the

28 November 2022 meeting of the committee, and in subsequent weeks following the committee's request for further assurance around the technology involved in, and scale of, the project. Arising from the discussion of this item, and questions from governors, the following points were highlighted:

- i. It was acknowledged that the business case was dependent on DMU being successful in its application for a grant from the Green Heat Network Fund (GHNF), with the balance of the cost of the implementation of the solution being drawn from (and already included in) the university's capital budget. It was hoped that the outcome of the funding bid would be known by May 2023.
- ii. It was noted that the development of the proposal had drawn upon the expertise of Vital Energi, who had been appointed following a procurement process, and who had significant experience in the installation of air source heat pumps and other renewable energy solutions. It was also noted that, subject to the approval of the proposed solution for DMU, a further procurement process would be required to appoint an appropriate company to carry out the installation.
- iii. It was acknowledged that the installation of the heat pump would lead to some disruption on campus. However, it was hoped that any such disruption could be kept to a minimum by carrying out as much of the work as possible during the summer when fewer students would be on campus.
- iv. Despite the relative novelty of air source heat pump technology in the UK, particularly in the higher education sector, the university was confident that it would be able to develop the skills in-house to operate and maintain the system.
- v. It was noted that some of DMU's buildings, as well as the Campus Centre, had not been included in the scope of the initial installation. The university would continue to explore potential options for renewable sources of heat for these buildings, the installation of which would take place over time.

RESOLVED:

- a. That 'Option 3' (i.e. the installation of an air source heat pump with funding from the GHNF and DMU), as outlined in the business case, be approved.
- b. That the proposal to submit a bid to the GHNF for a grant of £5.2m be approved.
- c. That the proposal that the balance of the cost of the solution (£13.4m) be met from DMU's capital budget be approved.

90 [Redacted]

91 [Redacted]

92 **Ofsted inspection outcome**

The Registrar (Academic) and Secretary to the Board introduced a report [92] concerning the outcome of Ofsted's inspection of the university's apprenticeships, and its Foundation Diploma in Art and Design, which had taken place over the period 10-13 January 2023. Arising from the discussion of this item, and questions from governors, the following points were highlighted:

- i. The Registrar (Academic) and Secretary to the Board echoed the thanks of the Chair (noted at item 86) to colleagues and governors who had supported the university's response to the inspection.
- ii. The university had now received a copy of the final report, which would be published on Ofsted's website on 10 February 2023.

- iii. As well as the positive overall outcome, the report had highlighted a number of areas of good practice, which the university hoped to share more broadly across other programmes of study.
- iv. The report had also noted some areas where additional work would be required, including data, action planning, and subcontractor controls, the latter of which would be subject to forthcoming guidance from the Education Skills and Funding Agency (ESFA).
- v. The university would develop a dashboard that would demonstrate at a high level its compliance with the requirements of Ofsted and the ESFA. It was intended that this dashboard be shared regularly through the university's academic governance structure, as well as individual elements being considered in more detail by the Audit and Finance and Performance Committees as appropriate.
- vi. It was noted that the university would be aiming for an 'Outstanding' result at its next inspection, which was expected to take place in five years' time.

RESOLVED:

- a. That the judgement of Ofsted that the university's apprenticeships and Foundation Diploma in Art and Design were 'Good' be noted.
- b. That the intention to present to the board at its meeting on 11 May 2023 the final Ofsted report, and the university's Self-Assessment Report and Quality Improvement Plan be noted. It was also intended that the board be provided with a detailed overview of how governors would be kept aware of the performance of the university's apprenticeships and Foundation Diploma in Art and Design provision.

93 [Redacted]

94 **Digital Transformation Strategy and Student Experience Programme**

The Chief Transformation Officer and the Pro Vice-Chancellor Student Experience introduced a report [94] concerning the Digital Transformation Strategy and the Student Experience Programme. Arising from the discussion of this item, and questions from governors, the following points were highlighted:

- i. Following the board's feedback at its meeting on 24 November 2022, the strategy had been updated to include detail concerning digital transformation in relation to academic research.
- ii. A number of digital low-effort/high-reward activities had been completed, including the introduction of an interactive campus map launched in January. This had been in response to student feedback and would allow prospective students to tour the campus virtually. Governors welcomed the ideas for digital innovation for students and the approach to user research.
- iii. It was noted that the Student Futures mapping focused from the point of admissions, and that the Marketing and Communications directorate were responsible for the early points of interest from prospective students, including advertising and Open Days.
- iv. Through the use of block learning, there would be multiple induction points and reinductions to keep students informed and engaged throughout their learning.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

Jonathan Mills left the meeting at this point

95 National Student Survey 2023 update

The Pro Vice-Chancellor Student Experience introduced a report [95] concerning the National Student Survey (NSS) 2023. Arising from the discussion of this item, and questions from governors, the following points were highlighted:

- i. The university had launched a communication initiative in order to ensure the best possible response rate to the NSS. Staff were encouraged to emphasise the survey to students to maintain awareness and provide time during teaching for students to complete the survey. To date, NSS responses rates had improved compared to the previous year.
- ii. By using the University Student Survey, the university would be able to gauge early feedback from students prior to the NSS, as well as obtaining feedback from students who did not participate in the NSS (e.g. those studying via transnational education partnerships).
- iii. The Student Experience Tracker showed that domestic students reported lower levels of satisfaction across all categories compared to international students. This could be attributed to difficulties associated with COVID-19, and local and national lockdowns, whereby students were unable to access on-campus teaching and student community life. However, the university had found that, for the 2022/23 academic year, block delivery of teaching had shown high levels of satisfaction. A detailed analysis of the data would be conducted to establish the full cause and effect for all student groups.
- iv. A further update was scheduled for the board in July 2023 following the conclusion of the NSS 2023.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

Benjamin Smith left the meeting at this point

96 Student numbers forecasting update

The CFRO introduced a report [96] concerning the progress that had been made to date in reviewing the university's student management information, following some of the challenges faced recently in recruitment-related forecasting. Arising from the discussion of this item, and questions from governors, the following points were highlighted:

- i. The board welcomed the significant progress that had been made since the update it had received at its meeting on 24 November 2022. It was noted that the work being done to address the recent challenges was being overseen by a working group, which was led by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor.
- ii. It was recognised that the university would need to get to a point where SAP was a reliable and accurate single source of high-quality data for student management information. The board agreed that this would be a significant but essential undertaking.
- iii. The university was confident in the quality of its data in other areas (i.e. non-student data) given the significantly smaller number of stakeholders.
- iv. It was suggested that it would be critical to include data quality as a key part of the university's digital transformation programme, thus ensuring a common approach to data collection, quality and security across the institution.

- v. It was agreed that a further update on this issue would be provided to the board at its meeting on 11 May 2023.

RESOLVED:

- a. That the report be noted.
- b. That the board would be provided with a further update on the university's student management information at its meeting on 11 May 2023.

97 Recruitment update

The Executive Director of Marketing and Communications introduced a report [97] concerning the university's performance in terms of student recruitment. Arising from the discussion of this item, and questions from governors, the following points were highlighted:

- i. The Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) end of cycle data for the previous academic year showed that 2022/23 had been challenging for DMU, particularly in terms of undergraduate applications. However, rates of conversion, and the university's performance in Clearing, had been strong.
- ii. **[Redacted]**
- iii. Domestic applications to DMU's postgraduate programmes appeared to be continuing a trend of year-on-year declines. The board welcomed the launch of a 'root and branch' review of the university's postgraduate portfolio, which would be conducted by the Recruitment, Admissions, Fees and Scholarships committee with oversight from the Deputy Vice-Chancellor.
- iv. International recruitment appeared to be much more positive, with the growth seen in the previous year continuing for 2023/24.
- v. It was noted that it would be difficult for the university to get a sense of the current performance of its competitors although it was acknowledged that this would become clearer over time.
- vi. It was agreed that the board would be provided with a regular update as to the university's position in terms of student recruitment. It was agreed that a report to this end would be shared with the board on a monthly basis.

RESOLVED:

- a. That the report be noted.
- b. That the board would be provided with an overview of the university's recruitment position via a report to be issued on a monthly basis.

98 [Redacted]

99 Risk management update

The Registrar (Academic) and Secretary to the Board introduced a report [99] concerning proposed changes to the university's risk management processes.

In discussing this item, it was noted that the university would continue to utilise a risk register that had been developed in-house. However, it was suggested that consideration might be given in future to employing a dedicated risk management system although it was recognised that the procurement of any such software would need to be balanced against other IT-related priorities.

RESOLVED:

- a. That the report be noted.
- b. That the board would be provided with a further update at its meeting scheduled for 11 May 2023.

100 Teaching Excellence Framework: final submission

The board considered a report [100] concerning the final submissions of both DMU and De Montfort Students' Union to the 2023 Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) exercise. Copies of both submissions had been appended to the report. It was noted that both documents had been submitted to the OfS by the deadline of 24 January 2023.

RESOLVED:

- a. That both submissions be noted.
- b. That the gratitude of the board to all who had been involved in the development of the 2023 TEF submission, across both the university and the students' union, be noted.

101 Member's updates

i. Audit Committee

The unconfirmed minutes of the committee's meeting of 28 November 2022 were included at item 102. In addition, the Chair of the committee highlighted the following key items from that meeting:

- The committee had considered and approved elements of the Annual Financial Return, including the annual accounts.
- The university continued to address issues relating to apprenticeships data that had been highlighted in an internal audit report in June 2022.
- A report summarising the number of complaints the university received from in 2021/22 had highlighted the importance of effective communication with the student body.
- Between April and September 2022, no formal disclosures had been made under the university's whistleblowing policy.

ii. Finance and Performance Committee

The unconfirmed minutes of the committee's meeting of 28 November 2022 were included at item 103. In addition, in the absence of the Chair of the committee, the Chair of the Board highlighted the following:

- The committee had considered the business case for the central renewable heat solution (considered by the board at item 89), which had been approved via correspondence following the meeting in light of some further assurance provided by the university around air source heat pumps.
- Following its credit rating annual review, Moody's had lowered the university's credit rating to 'A1 negative', which reflected a change in the UK's sovereign credit rating.
- The committee remained content that the university's investment portfolio, as managed by JP Morgan, continued to be appropriate.

iii. People and Culture Committee

In light of the committee not having met again since the board's previous meeting, no update was provided.

iv. Academic Board

The unconfirmed minutes of the 7 December 2022 meeting of Academic Board (AB) were included at item 105. In addition, the Academic Staff Governor highlighted the following:

- AB had considered an update on the university's compliance with OfS condition of registration B3 (student outcomes).
- Consideration of the 'Learning for Life' strategy implementation plan had led to positive discussions around creative approaches to teaching and learning.
- An evaluation of the first term of block teaching had suggested that a majority of students enjoyed studying one module at a time, and that they felt that they had made the right choice in choosing to study at DMU.

RESOLVED:

That the updates be noted.

102 Unconfirmed minutes of the 28 November 2022 meeting of the Audit Committee

RESOLVED:

That the unconfirmed minutes [102] be noted.

103 Annual summary report of complaints

RESOLVED:

That the report [103] be noted.

104 Unconfirmed minutes of the 28 November 2022 meeting of the Finance and Performance Committee

RESOLVED:

That the minutes [104] be noted.

105 Unconfirmed minutes of the 7 December 2022 meeting of the Academic Board

RESOLVED:

That the minutes [105] be noted.

106 Report of the Conferments Committee

RESOLVED:

That the report [106] be noted.

107 Items placed under the university seal since the previous meeting

RESOLVED:

That the report [107] be noted.

108 Review of the board's performance

Members were content that the board had been effective in discharging its responsibilities, and that all present had been enabled to be effective in their contribution.

109 Date of the next meeting

The next meeting of the Board of Governors would take place at 10:00 on 11 May 2023 in Bede House, room 0.46.

110 Any other business

No items were raised.

Meeting duration: 10:00-14:45