

Minutes:	Board of Governors
Time and date:	Thursday 5 March 2026 at 10:00
Location:	The Yard, rooms 3.02 and 3.05
Present:	Ian Squires (Chair), Tamera Campbell, Alison Court, Shreena Dasani, Stuart Dawkins, Justin Dobson, Phil Grierson, Jonathan Kerry, Jonathan Mills, Abdul Mullick, Catherine Njoroge, Katie Normington, Sardip Sandhu, Beverley Shears, Shikha Singh, Peter Tansley (to item 92) and Paul Woodgates
In attendance:	Alison Benson, Deputy Secretary and Head of Compliance, Simon Bradbury, Pro Vice-Chancellor International (item 89), Sarah Bradley, CEO of De Montfort Students' Union (item 91), Lis Clarke, Interim Executive Director of Marketing and Communications (item 82), Lawrence D'Souza, Director of International (items 82 and 89), Chloe Keenan, Governance Officer, Johnny Morris, Global Marketing Officer (item 82), Debbie Muddimer, Executive Director of Finance and Procurement, Nikki Pierce, Registrar (Academic) and Secretary to the Board
Secretary:	Nick Jeffs; nick.jeffs@dmu.ac.uk

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75 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Vivek Ganotra, Dilpreet Kaur, Patrick Moody and Twig Smalley. Apologies for an early departure had been received from Peter Tansley.

The board observed a minute's silence in memory of Khaleed Oladipo, a DMU student who had been killed close to the Leicester campus on 3 February 2026. The board expressed its condolences to Khaleed's family and friends and it was agreed that these condolences would be conveyed formally in a letter to Khaleed's parents.

76 Declarations of any pecuniary, family or other personal interests

No 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.

77 Minutes of previous meetings

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the 27 November 2025 [77a], 11 December 2025 [77b] and 22 December 2025 extraordinary meeting [77c] be approved.

78 Matters arising

The listed matters arising [78] had either been completed prior to the meeting or were scheduled for consideration at a future meeting of the board.

79 Report from the Chair

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

- i. The search for the university's next Chancellor had begun with approaches to potential candidates being led by executive search firm Odgers. It was hoped that a successor to the current Chancellor, Akram Khan, would be confirmed in time for his departure at the end of July 2026.
- ii. The Governance Office would arrange the interview for the role of Senior Independent Governor. It was noted that one governor had submitted an expression of interest in the role.
- iii. Governors were reminded that the 14 May meeting of the board would take place at the DMU London campus. For the avoidance of doubt, the Governance Office would issue a reminder to governors in due course.
- iv. Governors were reminded that they had been invited to visit the Faculty of Technology, Arts and Culture following the conclusion of the meeting.

RESOLVED:

That the update be noted.

80 Report from the Vice-Chancellor

The Vice-Chancellor introduced a report [80] concerning a range of recent developments in relation to the university and the higher education sector as a whole. Arising from the discussion of this item, and questions from governors, the following points were highlighted:

- i. The board was provided with an update as to the situation at the university's Dubai campus in light of the conflict in Iran and its impact on neighbouring countries, including the UAE. It was noted that the situation was more stable than it might have appeared in the media with much of the infrastructure of the UAE remaining open and operational. It was noted that the university's teaching had moved online and would remain so for the immediate future in line with local guidance. To date, there was no evidence of students wishing to leave Dubai in large numbers, and it was noted that DMU staff continued to provide support to affected individuals. It was noted that the Pro Vice-Chancellor International, who was based at the Dubai campus, was preparing a more detailed briefing note for the board, which would be shared following the meeting.
- ii. **[Redacted]**
- iii. It was noted that the university's catering contract would shortly be out to tender. It was hoped that whoever was granted the contract would be able to both expand and diversify the university's catering provision.
- iv. It was noted that the National Student Survey was currently open and that the university would continue working to improve the response rate.

RESOLVED:

- a. That the report be noted.

- b. That a briefing note concerning the current situation in Dubai, which had been prepared by the Pro Vice-Chancellor International, would be shared with the board following the meeting.

81 Report from the Student Governors

It was noted that, due to them both standing for re-election to their roles as Student Voice Leaders in the students' union – and, therefore, being in a period of 'purdah' – both student governors had given their apologies for the meeting and there was no report to deliver.

82 Recruitment and admissions update

The Interim Executive Director of Marketing and Communications, the Global Head of Marketing, and the Director of International introduced a report [82] concerning the university's current position in terms of student recruitment and admissions. Arising from the discussion of this item, and questions from governors, the following points were highlighted:

- i. It was felt that the mitigating actions outlined in the report, that were intended to improve the university's recruitment position, would have a positive impact but would likely still leave the institution with a shortfall versus target that would need to be made up in Clearing. It was acknowledged that this would be challenging but that it would also present an opportunity to further articulate what made DMU different to its competitors.
- ii. It was noted that the university's conversion rate was positive, and that the challenge would be around increasing the number of applications, and retaining applicants who already had an offer from DMU. It was recognised that this would be particularly challenging in the context of high tariff institutions continuing to make offers to students who might not have met their minimum entry requirements in previous years.
- iii. In addressing a question around the university's performance relative to its comparator group, it was noted that the membership of that group had been defined by UCAS rather than DMU, and that some of the members of the group were high tariff institutions who had been able to grow their domestic recruitment.
- iv. Regarding recent political developments, it was noted that the 'emergency brake' on student visa applications from Afghanistan, Cameroon, Myanmar and Sudan was likely to have little impact on DMU, and that the university was developing potential contingency plans to support recruitment efforts in Dubai in light of the conflict in Iran.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

83 [Redacted]

84 [Redacted]

85 [Redacted]

86 [Redacted]

87 Strategy refresh update

The Vice-Chancellor introduced a report [87] concerning the progress that had been made since the board's previous meeting in refreshing the Empowering University strategy for 2026–2031. Arising from the discussion of this item, and questions from governors, the following points were highlighted:

- i. It was noted that the development of the refreshed strategy was being informed by changes in government policy.
- ii. It was noted that the consultation process continued with a view to the proposed final draft of the strategy being shared with the board for approval at its meeting on 2 July 2026.

RESOLVED:

- a. That the progress made by the conclusion of Phase 2 co-creation activity be noted.
- b. That the proposed Phase 3 direction of travel and timeline, as outlined in the report, be endorsed.
- c. That the timetable for final approval by the board at its meeting on 2 July 2026 be noted.

88 [Redacted]

89 International recruitment and transnational education update

The Pro Vice-Chancellor International, and the Director of International, introduced a report [89] concerning the interconnected strategies for transnational education, international recruitment, and student mobility (DMU Global). Arising from the discussion of this item, and questions from governors, the following points were highlighted:

- i. It was recognised that the university would need to balance carefully the volume of international students with the associated risks to its UKVI BCA metrics. It was agreed that the university would need to ensure that the volume of students recruited from each market was relative to the risk associated with that market, and that not all markets would be suitable for large-scale recruitment.
- ii. It was noted that, over time, the university would seek to take on more direct recruitment of international students thereby reducing the costs associated with the use of agents.
- iii. In discussing Niels Brock, Copenhagen Business College, it was agreed that the university would consider what lessons might be learned from the termination of that partnership but it was recognised that there were limitations on the extent to which such policy changes could be predicted.
- iv. It was noted that the university did engage with the government, where relevant, when considering its international activities, most notably with the Department for International Trade, and with the UK's International Education Champion, Professor Sir Steve Smith.
- v. The board welcomed discussion of potential future international initiatives, noting in particular a forthcoming partnership with the University of Birmingham that would be aimed at expanding both institutions' attractiveness to the Chinese market.

RESOLVED:

- a. That DMU's current international initiatives, as outlined in the report, be noted.
- b. That the proposed future direction for the university, as outlined in the report, be approved.

90 Corporate Risk Register update

The Registrar (Academic) and Secretary to the Board introduced a report [90] concerning the latest version of the university's Corporate Risk Register.

In discussing this item, it was noted that the Audit and Risk Committee continued to have oversight of the risk register, which included conducting detailed reviews and making suggestions as to where the register might be improved.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

91 De Montfort Students' Union Annual Impact Report

The CEO of De Montfort Students' Union introduced a report [91] concerning De Montfort Students' Union's Annual Impact Report for the 2024/25 academic year. Arising from the discussion of this item, and questions from governors, the following points were highlighted:

- i. The board welcomed the Annual Impact Report, recognising that the students' union was a well-run and professional organisation, with a strong relationship with the university.
- ii. It was noted that the 'Council Café' initiative had helped to improve engagement with student council activities.
- iii. It was noted that the union would continue to encourage the different forms of volunteer work that was available to students, including formal roles such as Course Representatives.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

92 Member's updates

i. Audit and Risk Committee

The Audit and Risk Committee had last met on 2 February 2026. Key items of business that had been considered by the committee included updates on the university's Corporate Risk Register, its position in terms of UKVI, and a number of internal audit reports. The committee had also explored with BDO the issues that had been encountered during the 2024/25 external audit process, and had approved the reappointment of KPMG as the university's internal auditors.

ii. Finance and Performance Committee

The Chair of the Finance and Performance Committee noted that a number of items from its most recent meeting, which had taken place on 23 February 2026, had already been considered by the board earlier in the agenda. In addition, it was noted that the committee had considered a number of annual reports relating to

research and business innovation, and that the committee had met with representatives of JP Morgan to discuss how the performance of the university's investment portfolio might be improved.

iii. People and Culture Committee

The People and Culture Committee had last met on 29 January 2026. Key items of business that had been considered by the committee included a closure report for the university's Student Experience Programme, and reports concerning student retention, pensions, and Corporate Health Indicators.

iv. Academic Board

The Academic Board had last met on 10 December 2025. Key items of business that had been considered by the committee included policies concerning academic integrity and misconduct, and lecture capture, as well as updates to the Ofsted inspection framework.

v. Lead governors for Ofsted and skills

The lead governors for Ofsted and Skills continued to meet with the Registrar (Academic) and Secretary to the Board and the Pro Vice-Chancellor for Extended Education. Topics considered at recent meetings included mock inspections that would be carried out ahead of an anticipated formal inspection in January 2027; an OfS review of end point assessments; and the development of new apprenticeships programmes.

RESOLVED:

That the updates be noted.

Peter Tansley left the meeting at this point

93 Appointment of an independent governor

The Registrar (Academic) and Secretary to the Board introduced a report [93] concerning the proposed appointment of Professor Rama Thirunamachandran as an independent governor. It was also proposed that Rama be appointed a member of the Audit and Risk Committee.

RESOLVED:

That the proposed appointment of Professor Rama Thirunamachandran as an independent governor and a member of the Audit and Risk Committee be approved. It was noted that Rama's term of office would begin on 1 May 2026 and end on 30 April 2029.

94 Governor Engagement Framework

The Deputy Secretary and Head of Compliance [94] introduced a proposed Governor Engagement Framework for the board, which had devised in response to the action plan arising from Halpin's external governance effectiveness review in 2025.

RESOLVED:

That the proposed Governor Engagement Framework be approved.

95 Minutes of the 17 November 2025 meeting of the Audit and Risk Committee

RESOLVED:

That the minutes [95] be noted.

96 Minutes of the 18 September 2025 meeting of the Finance and Performance Committee

RESOLVED:

That the minutes [96] be noted.

97 Minutes of the 18 November 2025 meeting of the Finance and Performance Committee

RESOLVED:

That the minutes [97] be noted.

98 Minutes of the 11 December 2025 meeting of the Finance and Performance Committee

RESOLVED:

That the minutes [98] be noted.

99 Minutes of the 23 October 2025 meeting of the People and Culture Committee

RESOLVED:

That the minutes [99] be noted.

100 Student Experience programme (closure report)

RESOLVED:

That the report [100] be noted.

101 Unconfirmed minutes of the 10 December 2025 meeting of the Academic Board

RESOLVED:

That the minutes [101] be noted.

102 2025/26 financial position update appendices (for item 83)

RESOLVED:

That the appendices [102] be noted.

103 International recruitment and transnational education update appendix (for item 89)

RESOLVED:

That the appendix be [103] be noted.

104 Governor Engagement Framework appendix (for item 94)

RESOLVED:

That the appendix [104] be noted.

105 Conferments Committee report

RESOLVED:

That the report [105] be noted.

106 Items placed under the university seal

RESOLVED:

That the report [106] be noted.

107 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.

108 Date of the next meeting

The next meeting of the Board of Governors would take place at 10:00 on Thursday 14 May 2026 at DMU London.

109 Any other business

No items were raised.

Meeting duration: 10:00-14:39