

Minutes:	Board of Governors
Time and date:	10:00, Thursday 7 July 2022
Location:	A virtual meeting via MS Teams
Present:	Ian Squires (Chair), Catherine Clarke, Peter Collyer, Fiona Cownie, Jon Lees (until item 146), Jonathan Mills (from item 136), Katie Normington, Buddy Penfold, Sara Pierson, Sardip Sandhu, Aashni Sawjani (from item 132), Bev Shears, Peter Tansley and Paul Woodgates
In attendance:	Pete Cross (Chief Finance and Resource Officer), Mel Fowler (Executive Director of Marketing and Communications) (item 134), Simon Oldroyd (Pro Vice-Chancellor Sustainability and Dean of Health and Life Sciences) (item 144), Shreeya Paudel (Governor apprentice) (from item 137) Nikki Pierce (Registrar (Academic) and Secretary to the Board), Sarah Thomson (Director of Engagement) (item 139), Sam Weston (Corporate Governance Manager)
Secretary:	Nick Jeffs; nick.jeffs@dmu.ac.uk

CONFIRMED

129 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Phil Clarke, Andy Collop, Susan Orr, and Dan Toner. Apologies for early departure had been received from Jon Lees, Jonathan Mills and Shreeya Paudel.

130 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.

131 Appointment of the student governor

Governors considered a proposal that Aashni Sawjani join the board for a second term as student governor, following her nomination for the role by De Montfort Students' Union. The board had been provided with a copy of Aashni's biography prior to the meeting.

RESOLVED:

That the nomination of Aashni Sawjani as student governor for 2022/23 be approved. Aashni's term would run from 7 July 2022 to 30 June 2023.

Following approval of her appointment, Aashni Sawjani joined the meeting.

132 Decision taken between meetings

The board noted a decision taken in mid-June, via correspondence, approving the appointment of Buddy Penfold as the academic staff governor, following their election to the role.

133a Minutes of the meeting of 12 May 2022

The minutes [133a] of the 12 May 2022 meeting of the Board of Governors were approved.

133b Minutes of the extraordinary meeting of 23 June 2022

The minutes [133b] of the 23 June 2022 extraordinary meeting of the Board of Governors were approved.

134 Matters arising

All of the matters arising [134] had been completed prior to the meeting or were scheduled to be considered by the board at a future date.

135 Report from the Chair

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

- i. **[Redacted]**
- ii. A governor recruitment exercise was underway, which aimed to find up to four new independent governors, one of whom, it was hoped, would serve as the Chair of the Finance and Performance Committee. A shortlisting exercise would take place following the board meeting on 7 July, and interviews were expected to be held on 14 and 18 July.
- iii. The appointment of any new governors, as well as the reappointment of existing governors whose tenures were coming to a close, would be dealt with at a meeting of the Nominations Committee scheduled for 21 July. Ratification of any recommendations arising from that meeting would be sought from the board via email in late July.
- iv. The governor appraisal process for the 2021/22 academic year was underway. Governors had been asked, via a Doodle poll, to indicate when they might be available to meet with the Chair to carry out their appraisal. It was suggested that it would be useful for the link to the poll to be circulated again. It was noted that the Deputy Chair had also begun the process to conduct the appraisal of the Chair.
- v. The university's summer graduation ceremonies would begin on 22 August, with the ceremony at 17:00 on 24 August including the investiture of DMU's Chancellor, Akram Khan MBE. Governors were encouraged to attend as many ceremonies as they were able.

RESOLVED:

- a. That the report be noted.
- b. That the link to the Doodle poll concerning availability for appraisals be circulated to governors again.

136 Report from the Vice-Chancellor

The Vice-Chancellor (VC) introduced a report (136) concerning a range of recent developments in relation to the university and the higher education sector as a whole, including the results of the 2022 National Student Survey (NSS), which has been released on 6 July. Arising from the discussion of this item, and questions from governors, the following points were highlighted:

- i. The DBS consultation process was still underway. **[Redacted]**
- ii. The Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill had progressed through the House of Commons and was now due to be read in the House of Lords. In a related matter, the former Minister of State for Higher and Further Education, Michelle Donnellan MP, had written to universities asking them to consider whether participation in Advance HE's Race Equality Charter and Athena Swan was compatible with the principles of free speech and academic freedom. DMU felt that participation in the aforementioned schemes was valuable and that the letter raised questions around autonomy for universities. The Member of Parliament for Leicester South, Jonathan Ashworth MP, would be raising these matters in the House of Commons on behalf of DMU.
- iii. The university welcomed the results of the NSS, which showed improvements in a number of areas, including overall student satisfaction. However, it was recognised that DMU was on a three-year journey in terms of enhancing its student experience and that, despite the improvement, the results placed DMU significantly below benchmark in a number of areas. There was still more to do over the next two years, particularly in terms of improvements to teaching quality.
- iv. It would be important to ensure that the upward trajectory in terms of student satisfaction was not arrested by issues that might emerge from the implementation of Education 2030. It was noted that the Pro Vice-Chancellor Education would have oversight of this programme of work, and that the introduction of block teaching elsewhere in the sector (e.g. at the University of Suffolk) had led to improvements in student satisfaction.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

137 Recruitment and admissions update

The Executive Director of Marketing and Communications introduced a report [137] that outlined the university's current position in terms of student recruitment for the 2022/23 academic year. Arising from the discussion of this item, and questions from governors, the following points were highlighted:

- i. It was recognised that Clearing was still uncertain at this point in the recruitment cycle, however, the university was confident of being able to meet its financial target in terms of income from tuition fees.
- ii. The university's preferential offer strategy appeared to be proving popular with applicants and had made a notable impact in those accepting their offer to study at DMU. According to market insight, a number of other factors had proved to be popular, including the 'Made from More' advertising campaign, a return to in-person Open Days, and the changes to learning and teaching that would be introduced as part of the Education 2030 programme.
- iii. Overseas recruitment had seen significant growth from the previous year, both in terms of the number of applications and the number of deposits that the university

had received. On the basis of current projections, it was suggested that DMU may be in a position to recruit overseas students beyond the target number, although it would be important to ensure that the university had the capacity to do so before making any such offers.

- iv. It was also recognised that recruiting higher numbers of overseas students had the potential to increase DMU's UKVI-related risks, including its performance in the annual Basic Compliance Assessment. The university had introduced a number of measures aimed at mitigating these risks, which had been outlined to the Audit Committee in a report considered at its 6 June 2022 meeting.
- v. The university continued to work closely with its External Admission Support Function in order to improve the speed and accuracy of application processing and decision times.
- vi. The university had begun to consider programmes where, on the basis of an improved performance in terms of recruitment, it might increase its entry tariff. Proposals to this effect would be considered by the University Leadership Board in due course.
- vii. It was noted that recruitment of domestic postgraduate taught and postgraduate research students was underperforming in comparison to other markets. The university would be embarking on a significant review of its postgraduate provision to identify ways in which its offer might be made more attractive in these areas.
- viii. As a result of its current performance in terms of student recruitment, the university was confident that it would incur fewer accommodation void charges this year than it had in the previous admissions cycle.
- ix. Recruitment from the local market appeared to be strong, and growth was being observed in recruitment from London and the West Midlands.
- x. The board welcomed the university's return to being able to engage with schools and colleges, following a forced hiatus due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It was hoped that the positive impact of the current work in this area would be felt in the 2023/24 recruitment cycle.

RESOLVED:

- a. That the report be noted.
- b. That a timeline of dates associated with Clearing would be circulated to the board.

138 Medium-term financial plan

The Chief Finance and Resources Officer introduced a report [138], and delivered a presentation, concerning the university's medium-term financial plan for the five years from 2023/24 to 2026/27. The plan had been approved by the University Leadership Board at its meeting on 7 June 2022 and recommended to the board by the Finance and Performance Committee at its meeting on 16 June 2022. Arising from the discussion of this item, and questions from governors, the following points were highlighted:

- i. It was noted that the plan had been adjusted to account for the current position in terms of inflation. **[Redacted]**
- ii. **[Redacted]**
- iii. It was noted that there were no immediate, significant implications of deferring major Estates projects such as the redevelopment of the library and the refurbishment of Bede Hall. It was agreed that the redevelopment of the library should include consultation with staff and students in order to ensure that it met the needs of the university's community. The refurbishment of Bede Hall could only take place during the summer.

- iv. It was noted that some capital expenditure had been set aside to support digital transformation projects. However, the university's overall strategy in this area was still in development, and would be overseen by the new Chief Transformation Officer. It was suggested that it would be useful for the board to have an update on the progress of the development of the strategy at a future meeting.
- v. There was no expectation that research income would be impacted by the outcome of the ongoing DBS consultation. It was noted that the university aimed to raise its ambitions around income from research activities, and that the full implications of DMU's performance in the 2021 Research Excellence Framework in terms of funding, were still to be confirmed.
- vi. The board would continue to be provided with updates as to the financial performance of the university. It was noted that the University Leadership Board was provided with financial updates on a monthly basis and that the Finance and Performance Committee were provided with updates every quarter.

RESOLVED:

- a. That the medium-term financial plan for the five years from 2022/23 to 2026/27 as recommended by the Finance and Performance Committee at its meeting on 16 June 2022, be approved.
- b. That the university's ability to maintain appropriate cash levels to continue investing in the five-year capital programme and manage in-year fluctuations in cashflow, as outlined in the plan, be noted.
- c. That the deadline of 23 January 2023 for the submission of the 2022 Annual Accountability Return to the Office for Students be noted.
- d. That the board be provided with an update at a future meeting on the progress of the development of the university's digital transformation strategy.

139 Engagement Strategy

The Director of Engagement introduced a report [139] concerning the university's Engagement Strategy. Arising from the discussion of this item, and questions from governors, the following points were highlighted:

- i. It was recognised that the university was starting from a relatively low base in terms of its fundraising activity and the development of a cohesive alumni network **[Redacted]**.
- ii. It would be important for the university to develop a cohesive approach to forming relationships with new donors, of which the Empowering University strategy, and DMU's widening participation mission, should be key elements. It was also suggested that it would be useful to consider how the story of DMU's trajectory might feature i.e. outlining where the institution was currently and where it wanted to be in the future, emphasising the journey on which the university had embarked. It was noted that a such a 'pitch' was in development and that this would be shared with the board in due course.
- iii. Whilst recognising that there were areas of overlap, the board welcomed the separation of fundraising and alumni engagement. It was noted that the university's alumni engagement strategy would vary depending on how long ago an individual graduated from DMU.
- iv. Consideration should be given as to any areas of overlap between the Board of Governors and the Civic Engagement Board, and the extent to which governors might be able to support the university's fundraising activities.

RESOLVED:

- a. That the university's approach to engagement, development and community activity, as outlined in the Engagement Strategy, be endorsed.
- b. That the fundraising 'pitch' would be shared with the board in due course.

140 Teaching Excellence Framework update

The Vice-Chancellor introduced a report [140] concerning the university's approach to, and preparations for, the forthcoming Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF). Arising from the discussion of this item, and questions from governors, the following points were highlighted:

- i. A first draft of the university's TEF submission had been considered by the Academic Board at its meeting on 29 June 2022, where it had been received positively.
- ii. It was suggested that an institution's TEF ranking was not a significant factor in an applicants' decision of where to study and, therefore, it would be helpful for the university to maintain a sense of perspective about the value of its final award.

RESOLVED:

That the university's approach to, and preparations for, the forthcoming TEF, as outlined in the report, be endorsed.

141 Overview of quality assurance and enhancement for 2020/21

The Registrar (Academic) and Secretary to the Board introduced a report [141] concerning the outcomes and actions arising from the operation of the university's key quality assurance mechanisms during 2020/21.

It was acknowledged that this was an area where future reporting might be improved by adopting a more data-driven approach that would focus on the outcomes of the delivery of learning and teaching as well as what the university might do to make further improvements in this area.

RESOLVED:

- a. That the report be noted.
- b. That the proposed improvements to future reporting in this area be endorsed.

142 Ofsted Self-Assessment Report and Quality Improvement Plan

The Registrar (Academic) and Secretary to the Board introduced a report [142] concerning the university's Self-Assessment Report (SAR) and Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) for its apprenticeships provision and the Art and Design Foundation Diploma. Arising from the discussion of this item, and questions from governors, the following points were highlighted:

- i. It was acknowledged that this was an area in which the university's need to make a number of improvements to the quality of its data, many of which were already underway. It was intended that future reporting around the SAR and QIP would be more dynamic and led by data; the SAR and QIP would be next be presented to the board for assurance purposes in February 2023.

- ii. Leadership of apprenticeships at DMU had been transferred to the Registrar (Academic) and Secretary to the Board, who would be the university's 'Ofsted nominee' with oversight of Ofsted compliance, and the Pro Vice-Chancellor Education who would be the deputy Ofsted nominee with overall responsibility for the management of the university's provision.
- iii. The current round of governor recruitment, as noted at item 135, hoped to identify a new independent governor who would act in the role of Ofsted 'champion' for the board, replacing former governors, Lisa Capper and Rob Hull.
- iv. It was suggested that an Ofsted inspection was reasonably likely at some point in the 2022/23 academic year. The board would need to be involved in the inspection and so it was agreed that it would be useful to provide governors with some detailed information as to how they might be best prepared. It was noted that a mock inspection was planned for the autumn of 2022.

RESOLVED:

- a. That the SAR and QIP be noted.
- b. That governors would be provided with some information as to how they might be best prepared for a potential future Ofsted inspection.

143 Freedom of Expression and Academic Freedom policy

The Registrar (Academic) and Secretary to the Board introduced a report [143] concerning the university's Freedom of Expression and Academic Freedom policy. The report proposed that the university continue to work to the version of the policy that had been approved in 2019 until such time as the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill had gained royal assent, and an assessment of the Bill's impact on DMU could be carried out.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

144 Update from the Faculty of Health and Life Sciences

The Pro Vice-Chancellor for Sustainability and Dean of Health and Life Sciences provided governors with a presentation on the faculty's recent performance across a range of areas, including research, enterprise and commercial activity, and finances. Arising from the discussion of this item, and questions from governors, the following points were highlighted:

- i. It was recognised that the difficulties in finding placements limited the university's ability to grow some of its practice-based programmes. Recently, there had been a gradual move on the part of some professional, statutory and regulatory bodies towards allowing time spent in simulations to count towards their accreditation requirements in terms of hours spent on placement.
- ii. Governors welcomed the faculty's relationship with the Ministry of Justice, noting in particular that the extension of the contract to provide the Professional Qualification in Probation was a positive indicator of the strength of the partnership.
- iii. **[Redacted]**
- iv. The faculty was working to ensure that it had representation on the board of local Integrated Care Systems, which had been established across England on a statutory basis on 1 July 2022.

- v. The faculty continued to explore transnational education opportunities although it was noted that these tended to be more specialised, such as the renal nursing training that the university had delivered in Dubai.

RESOLVED:

That the presentation be noted.

145 Member's updates

Members of the board provided updates on key items of business that had been discussed at their most recent meetings:

- i. Audit Committee

Items of note included:

- Consideration of a number of internal audit reports from internal auditor KPMG, including apprenticeships, risk management, strategic planning, and cyber security. The apprenticeships report had outlined a number of significant issues; however, the committee had been assured that the university was taking steps to address these and that rapid improvements would be made in the autumn. KPMG would conduct a follow-up audit of this area later in the year.
- The committee had reviewed and approved a number of governance-related items, including the Instrument and Articles of Government, the Standing Orders, and the Scheme of Delegation which were before the board for approval at this meeting.
- The outcome of the university's UK Visas and Immigration Basic Compliance Assessment for 2021 had been positive. At present, the data for the 2022 assessment also looked positive, although it was acknowledged that increases in the number of overseas students, as discussed at item 137, might expose the university to a greater degree of risk. The committee would continue to monitor this area closely.

- ii. Finance and Performance Committee

In the absence of the Chair of the Finance and Performance Committee, no update was provided. However, it was noted that the unconfirmed minutes of the committee's 16 June 2022 meeting were included at item 151.

- iii. People and Culture Committee

Items of note included:

- A presentation concerning the Empowering People strategy implementation plan, which emphasised the importance of the university seeking to understand the 'felt' experience of its students and staff.
- A discussion of the priorities for the People and Organisational Development directorate for the 2022/23 academic year. The committee had stressed the importance of focussing on staff wellbeing, as well as that of students, particularly given recent rises in the cost of living.

iv. Academic Board

Items of note included:

- A proposal regarding changes to the academic structures in the Faculty of Business and Law, which was aimed at creating a more effective alignment of academic disciplines.
- A presentation concerning DMU's approach to the TEF as well as the opportunity to review a draft of the university's submission.
- A discussion of the outcomes for DMU of the 2021 Research Excellence Framework exercise, including consideration of how the university might improve its performance in future.

v. De Montfort Students' Union

Items of note included:

- The students' union had begun work on its element of the university's TEF submission.
- The most recent round of programme validations in support of Education 2030 had been completed.
- The union had held a number of events that had increased footfall in the Campus Centre building, including events in support of International Women's Day and Holocaust Memorial Day.
- The union would be launching an LGBTQ mentoring programme with Georgia College.
- Representatives of the union had met with representatives of Study World during their visit to the university in May 2022.

RESOLVED:

That the updates be noted.

146 De Montfort Students' Union election report

The board considered a report [146] concerning the election of De Montfort Students' Union's (DSU's) five Executive Officers and six Liberation Officers for the 2022/23 academic year.

It was noted that the National Union of Students' benchmark for turnout in elections to roles such as these was 12.1% for students' unions based in England and 11.7% for the UK overall. DSU's turnout of 11.6% was, therefore, slightly below both benchmarks.

RESOLVED:

That the election report be noted.

147 CUC Higher Education Code of Governance: compliance assessment

The Registrar (Academic) and Secretary to the Board introduced a report [147] concerning a self-assessment of the board's compliance with the Committee of University Chairs' Higher Education Code of Governance (September 2020). The self-assessment had been considered and approved by the Audit Committee at its meeting on 6 June 2022.

RESOLVED:

That the self-assessment be approved for publication on the university's website.

148a Instrument and Articles of Government, and Standing Orders

The Registrar (Academic) and Secretary to the Board introduced a report [148a] concerning proposed amendments to the university's Instrument and Articles of Government, and the Standing Orders for the board and its committees. The proposed amendments had been considered and approved by the Audit Committee at its meeting on 6 June 2022.

The report also asked the board to consider a recommendation of Advance HE's 2021 Governance Effectiveness Review regarding the potential appointment of a second student governor. The board welcomed the proposal, stressing the importance of ensuring that the student governors would, insofar as was possible, be representative of the university's diverse student body.

It was agreed that the Registrar (Academic) and Secretary to the Board would work with the students' union to establish an appropriate process for the nomination of the second student governor. This proposed process would be considered by the board at a future meeting.

RESOLVED:

- a. That the Instrument and Articles of Government and Standing Orders be approved and published on the university's website.
- b. That the Registrar (Academic) and Secretary to the Board would work with the students' union to establish an appropriate process for the nomination of the second student governor, and that this process would be considered by the board at a future meeting.

148b Scheme of Delegation

The Registrar (Academic) and Secretary to the Board introduced a report [148b] concerning proposed revisions to the university's Scheme of Delegation. The proposed revisions had been considered and approved by the Audit Committee at its meeting on 6 June 2022.

RESOLVED:

That the revised Scheme of Delegation be approved for publication on the university's website.

149 Constitution of the Audit Committee for 2021/22

The Registrar (Academic) and Secretary to the Board introduced the constitution of the Audit Committee for the 2021/22 academic year [149].

It was noted that the board's endorsement of the constitution was being sought at this late stage in the year due to a number of amendments that had been considered across the course of 2021/22, and which had only been approved by the committee at its meeting on 6 June 2022.

RESOLVED:

That the constitution of the Audit Committee for 2021/22 be endorsed.

150 Unconfirmed minutes of the 6 June 2022 meeting of the Audit Committee

The unconfirmed minutes were noted.

151 Unconfirmed minutes of the 16 June 2022 meeting of the Finance and Performance Committee

The unconfirmed minutes were noted.

152 Minutes of the 25 April 2022 meeting of the People and Culture Committee

The minutes were noted.

153 Unconfirmed minutes of the 20 June 2022 meeting of the People and Culture Committee

The unconfirmed minutes were noted.

154 Unconfirmed minutes of the 29 November 2021 meeting of the Nominations Committee

The unconfirmed minutes were noted.

155 Minutes of the 4 May 2022 meeting of the Academic Board

The minutes were noted.

156 Report from Academic Board

The report, including the amendments to the Student Complaints Procedure that had been approved by the Academic Board at its meeting on 29 June 2022, was noted.

157 Board and committee meeting dates for 2022/23

The board and committee meeting dates for 2022/23 were noted.

It was agreed that the proposed second away day, which would take place in January 2023, be removed from the schedule. It was noted that doing so would still leave the board with seven scheduled meetings during 2022/23.

158 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.

159 Date of the next meeting

The next meeting of the Board of Governors would take place at 10:00 on 29 September 2022 at a venue to be determined on DMU's campus.

160 Any other business

The Chair thanked on behalf of the board independent governor Dan Toner and Deputy Vice-Chancellor Andy Collop for their services to DMU over a number of years.

After two and a half years in the role, Dan Toner would be stepping down as Chair of the Finance and Performance Committee at the end of the 2021/22 academic year, a move that would coincide with the end of his first term as a governor. Subject to the approval of the Nominations Committee and the board, Dan had indicated a desire to continue as an independent governor for a second term, and to become a member of the Audit Committee for the 2022/23 academic year.

Andy Collop would be leaving DMU later in the summer to take up a new role as Vice-Chancellor, Principal and CEO at Hartpury University and College. Andy had joined DMU in 2011 and held a number of roles over the years in addition to that of Deputy Vice-Chancellor, including Pro Vice-Chancellor and Dean of the former Faculty of Technology, Pro Vice-Chancellor Research and Innovation and, more recently, Interim Vice-Chancellor between 2019 and 2021. The board wished Andy well in his new role.

Meeting duration: 10:00-13:20