

<b>Minutes:</b>	Board of Governors
<b>Time and date:</b>	10:00, Thursday 12 May 2022
<b>Location:</b>	The Yard, rooms 3.02 and 3.05
<b>Present:</b>	Ian Squires (Chair), Catherine Clarke, Phil Clarke, Peter Collyer, Fiona Cownie, Jon Lees, Jonathan Mills, Katie Normington, Sara Pierson, Sardip Sandhu, Aashni Sawjani, Bev Shears, Peter Tansley, Dan Toner and Paul Woodgates
<b>In attendance:</b>	Janine Brennan (Executive Director of People and Organisational Development) (items 100a-e), David Bryan (Director of Strategic Planning) (items 110a-e), Andy Collop (Deputy Vice-Chancellor), Jo Cooke (Executive Director of Student and Academic Services) (item 111), Pete Cross (Chief Finance and Resource Officer), Heather McLaughlin (Pro Vice-Chancellor Academic Staff Development and Dean of Business and Law) (items 108, 110a-e), Simon Oldroyd (Pro Vice-Chancellor Sustainability and Dean of Health and Life Sciences) (items 110a-e), Sushma Patel (Pro Vice-Chancellor Student Experience and Dean of Computing, Engineering and Media) (item 113), Nikki Pierce (Registrar (Academic) and Secretary to the Board), Sam Weston (Corporate Governance Manager)
<b>Secretary:</b>	Nick Jeffs; <a href="mailto:nick.jeffs@dmu.ac.uk">nick.jeffs@dmu.ac.uk</a>

*CONFIRMED*

### **102 Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence had been received from Lisa Capper and Shreeya Paudel.

### **103 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.

### **104 Minutes of the previous meeting**

The minutes [104] of the 10 March 2022 meeting of the Board of Governors were approved subject to the further redaction of item 82iii.

### **105 Matters arising**

[Redacted]

All of the remaining matters arising [105] had been completed prior to the meeting or were scheduled to be considered by the board at a future date.

## **106 Report from the Chair**

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

- i. A recruitment exercise was underway with the aim of bolstering the membership of the board and addressing skills gaps arising from recent departures. In particular, applications were being encouraged from individuals with experience of further education; audit; Ofsted; and finance at a senior level (with a view to them potentially serving as Chair of the Finance and Performance Committee, as the current Chair had indicated that he wished to step down from the role at the end of the academic year). It was also hoped that this exercise would help to bolster the diversity of the board. In light of the university's current financial position, it was noted that an executive search firm would not be engaged to support this round of recruitment and that the process would instead be initiated and overseen by the Governance Office.
- ii. The process for the election and appointment of a new academic staff governor was also underway; seven members of academic staff had nominated themselves for the role and an election would be held for three weeks from 16 May. It was hoped that the successful candidate would join the board for its meeting on 7 July.
- iii. Representatives of Study World, DMU's partner in its Dubai campus, would be visiting the university on 16 May. The Chair and Paul Woodgates would be welcoming the Study World delegation on behalf of the board.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

## **107 Report from the Vice-Chancellor**

The Vice-Chancellor (VC) introduced a report (107) 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. It was noted that the results of the recent staff pulse survey had been considered in detail by the People and Culture Committee at its meeting on 25 April.
- ii. Programme validations associated with the Education 2030 programme continued to be progressed. At its meeting on 4 May, Academic Board had considered and approved a number of proposals relating to Education 2030, including the reduction to 15 days of the turnaround time for the return of feedback on student assessments.
- iii. In response to a letter setting out priorities for the Office for Students (OfS), it was noted that the Deputy Vice-Chancellor was leading the development of an action plan aimed at exploring areas where it appeared DMU had fallen below the threshold for so-called 'high quality' provision. Any issues that might be identified as part of this process would be addressed at faculty level.

RESOLVED:

- a. That the report be noted.

- b. That, at future meetings of the board, where the university's financial position was not the subject of its own agenda item, an update would be provided as part of the VC's report.

## 108 Research Excellence Framework 2021 outcomes

The Pro Vice-Chancellor Academic Staff Development and Dean of Business and Law delivered a presentation concerning an overview of the university's performance in the Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2021. Arising from the discussion of this item, and questions from governors, the following points were highlighted:

- i. The university's REF strategy had been inclusive, with over double the number of academic staff being submitted to the exercise than in 2014, which had led to an increase in the university's research capacity. However, the university's overall GPA suggested that there had not been a similar increase in the overall quality of its submission.
- ii. Analysis of the university's performance would continue in the coming weeks. However, some initial views were that:
  - it would be useful to involve external advisors (preferably with experience of sitting on REF panels) when assessing the quality of the university's submissions;
  - it may be more appropriate for the university to focus on a smaller number of high-quality submissions than to continue with its current approach;
  - colleagues who were producing high quality research should be provided with appropriate support. However, it was acknowledged that it would continue to be important to develop those colleagues who were working towards improving the quality of their research and those who are early in their careers; and
  - it might be useful to focus the university's research in areas of particular expertise and/or those areas that are less contested in terms of research across the sector.
- iii. A fuller picture of other institutions' approach to, and performance in, the REF would emerge in the coming weeks. It was noted that impact case studies would be made available for review online.
- iv. It was acknowledged that, in a small number of areas, the roles of staff who had made a positive contribution to the REF might be at risk under the ongoing consultation as part of the Delivering Business Sustainability programme. However, it was recognised that the proposals on which colleagues were being consulted were influenced by a number of factors, including student recruitment.
- v. The impact of the university's performance on its various league table positions would become apparent in due course.
- vi. It was noted that the next REF exercise would take place in 2027.

RESOLVED:

That the presentation be noted.

## 109 [Redacted]

## 110a Strategy implementation plan: Empowering People

The Executive Director of People and Organisation Development introduced a report [110a] concerning the implementation plan for the 'Empowering People' pillar of the 'The Empowering University' strategy. Arising from the discussion of this item, and questions from governors, the following points were highlighted:

- i. It was suggested that, where appropriate, it would be useful to be more specific about the metric that was being used as the current and target measure (for example, being explicit that the 'overall student satisfaction' target was derived from the university's performance in the National Student Survey (NSS)).
- ii. Progress towards the completion of the implementation plan would be tracked via the University Leadership Board, with high-level updates provided to the Board of Governors on an annual basis. The People and Culture Committee would monitor in detail elements relating to the 'people' aspects of the plan.
- iii. The university conducted a pulse survey of final year students in November, the aim of which was to get a sense of any current or emerging issues that might be addressed ahead of the launch of the NSS. It was suggested that it would be difficult to hold the survey any earlier given that most students only started their studies in September/October. However, consideration would be given as to whether the time it took in which to produce the analysis of the results of the survey might be reduced.
- iv. The university would be engaging with staff and students to develop an understanding of the 'felt' experience of both groups, and what was important to them. It was hoped that this would help determine how improvements to the staff experience might, in turn, lead to improvements in areas of the student experience.

RESOLVED:

That the implementation plan for the 'Empowering People' pillar of the 'The Empowering University' strategy be approved.

## 110b Strategy implementation plan: Financial Strength

The Chief Finance and Resources Officer introduced a report [110b] concerning the implementation plan for the 'Financial Strength' cross-cutting theme of the 'The Empowering University' strategy. Arising from the discussion of this item, and questions from governors, the following points were highlighted:

- i. **[Redacted]**
- ii. **[Redacted]**
- iii. Business cases would be expected to outline both the financial and non-financial benefits of the proposals being made therein.
- iv. The Strategic Change Board had oversight of DMU's key strategic programmes, with issues of particular concern being escalated to the University Leadership Board as appropriate.

RESOLVED:

That the implementation plan for the 'Financial Strength' cross-cutting theme of the 'The Empowering University' strategy be approved.

### **110c Strategy implementation plan: Knowledge Creation**

The Pro Vice-Chancellor for Academic Staff Development and Dean of Business and Law introduced a report [110c] concerning the implementation plan for the 'Knowledge Creation' pillar of the 'The Empowering University' strategy. Arising from the discussion of this item, and questions from governors, the following points were highlighted:

- i. It would be important to maintain the university's robust approach to the examination of funding bids. This approach would be further bolstered by support from external expertise as well as a greater degree of focus on larger, high-quality bids.
- ii. It was recognised that, whilst important, interdisciplinarity did not need to be part of every research project or funding bid.

RESOLVED:

That the implementation plan for the 'Knowledge Creation' pillar of the 'The Empowering University' strategy be approved.

### **110d Strategy implementation plan: Sustainability**

The Pro Vice-Chancellor Sustainability and Dean of Health and Life Sciences introduced a report [110d] concerning the implementation plan for the 'Sustainability' cross-cutting strategic theme of the 'The Empowering University' strategy. Arising from the discussion of this item, and questions from governors, the following points were highlighted:

- i. It was recognised that the resource required to support the implementation of the sustainability theme would come from a number of different budgets across the institution, and that it would have interdependencies with the implementation plans of other elements of the strategy.
- ii. It was suggested that it would be useful to develop a communications plan to support the implementation of this and other elements of the strategy, noting in particular the role of sustainability in advertising and student recruitment.

RESOLVED:

That the implementation plan for the 'Sustainability' cross-cutting strategic theme of the 'The Empowering University' strategy be approved.

### **110e Strategy KPT mapping**

The Director of Strategic Planning introduced a report [110e] concerning updated key performance targets (KPTs) for the university strategy, as well the way in which those KPTs mapped against associated strategic pillars, cross-cutting themes, and implementation plans. Arising from the discussion of this item, and questions from governors, the following points were highlighted:

- i. It was recognised that grouping together of staff and students under the umbrella term 'BAME' was not helpful; it was noted that the 'Equality for All' implementation plan considered in more detail a breakdown of those various groups.
- ii. Consideration would be given to ways in which intent might be measured in terms of graduate employment. The current approach assumed that all graduates would be seeking 'highly skilled employment', which might not always be the case.

- iii. It was recognised that the KPTs outlined in the report, as well as those associated with individual implementation plans, were ‘living’ documents that would, and should, change over time to reflect developments both at DMU and across the sector. It was agreed that the university should be able to make minor changes to these documents without recourse to the board.

RESOLVED:

- a. That the updated KPTs be noted.
- b. That the way in which the KPTs mapped against associated strategic pillars, cross-cutting themes and implementation plans, be noted.

**111 OfS statement of expectations: harassment and sexual misconduct**

The Executive Director of Student and Academic Services introduced a report [111] concerning the OfS’ statement of expectations for preventing and addressing harassment and sexual misconduct affecting students in higher education. Arising from the discussion of this item, and questions from governors, the following points were highlighted:

- i. It was clarified that the number of disclosures were those made whilst an individual was a student at DMU, and that they represented incidents that had taken place both on and off campus, as well as those that had occurred prior to their enrolment.
- ii. Whilst there had been a number of disclosures, it was suggested that the actual number of incidents was likely to be higher given it was known to be an area of underreporting. The university was working with the students’ union to try and encourage disclosures from all students, and it was recognised that it would be critical to understand why an individual might choose not to disclose such incidents, including any issues that may be particular to certain communities.
- iii. It was noted that the university had taken steps to try and tackle these issues prior to the OfS issuing its statement of expectations. The ‘No Space for Hate’ project, for example, had been developed prior to the emergence of COVID-19 but its launch had been put on hold due to the impact of the pandemic.
- iv. It was recognised that further analysis of the data would be required in order to understand any trends across faculties, as well as the extent to which disclosures related to historic or more recent incidents.
- v. Evidence from surveys suggested that students who took advantage of the university’s support in this area were satisfied with the help that they had received.
- vi. It was noted that compliance with the statement of expectations was not currently a condition of registration with the OfS, but that there was the possibility that this might change in future.
- vii. It was noted that the University Leadership Board and People and Culture Committee would receive detailed biannual updates on this issue, and that the Board of Governors would receive a high-level summary of the data on an annual basis.

RESOLVED:

- a. That the direction of travel, as set out in the report, be endorsed.
- b. That the proposed schedule of reporting, as set out in the report, be endorsed.

## 112 Conclusion of Prevent monitoring for 2020/21

The Registrar (Academic) and Secretary to the Board introduced a report [112] concerning the outcome of the university's 2021 Prevent Accountability and Data Return. Following their review of DMU's data, the OfS had confirmed that they had no queries regarding the university's submission.

RESOLVED:

That the outcome be noted.

## 113 Faculty update: Computing, Engineering and Media

The Pro Vice-Chancellor for Student Experience and Dean of Computing, Engineering and Media provided governors with a presentation on the faculty's recent performance across a range of areas, including teaching, research, partnerships, and finances. Arising from the discussion of this item, and questions from governors, the following points were highlighted:

- i. It was acknowledged that the faculty's student body did not necessarily reflect the diversity of its staff and the wider demographics of the university. However, the faculty was hoping to address this issue by seeking ways in which to encourage greater diversity amongst its applicants.
- ii. The faculty's Cyber Technology Institute was recognised as an academic centre of excellence in cyber security research, and a number of its staff were recognised internationally as leaders in their field.
- iii. The introduction of Aeronautical Engineering programmes at DMU had allowed the university to take a market share of applicants who might otherwise have studied at a competitor institution.
- iv. The faculty's financial contribution was high and included significant income from research and commercial activities.
- v. It was acknowledged that the majority of the faculty's partnerships were focussed around academic research and enterprise, rather than income.
- vi. Areas of future activity for the faculty would be around the introduction of programmes focussed on sustainability and environmental management, as well as data science and the application of artificial intelligence.

RESOLVED:

That the presentation be noted.

## 114 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

The Audit Committee had not met again since the board's previous meeting therefore there were no new items of business to discuss. It was noted that, following the departure from the board of former governor Rob Hull, Fiona Cownie has agreed to bolster the membership of the Audit Committee on a temporary basis and until such time as a permanent replacement could be appointed. It was

also noted the unconfirmed minutes of the committee's 7 February meeting were included at item 115.

ii. Finance and Performance Committee

The Finance and Performance Committee had not met again since the board's previous meeting, therefore there were no new items of business to discuss. It was noted that the unconfirmed minutes of the committee's 17 February meeting were included at item 116.

iii. People and Culture Committee

Items of note from the committee's meetings on 21 February and 25 April were as follows:

- The committee had received an update concerning DMU's health and safety management plan, and had welcomed the university's low rate of incidents.
- The results of the recent staff pulse survey had been explored in detail. Whilst there was some positive feedback around leadership and management relations, it was recognised that more would need to be done to improve colleagues' feelings around empowerment and involvement in university decision making.
- The committee welcomed a year-on-year reduction in the university's gender pay gap, which continued the downward trend that had begun in 2018.
- As also reported at 111, the committee had considered the implications of the OfS' statement of expectations for preventing and addressing harassment and sexual misconduct affecting students in higher education on its reporting of employee relations casework.

iv. Ofsted and skills

In the absence of Lisa Capper, the Registrar (Academic) and Secretary to the Board provided a brief update on the university's ongoing preparations for a potential future Ofsted inspection.

v. Academic Board

Items of note from the board's most recent meeting included:

- Academic Board continued to receive a comprehensive report from the VC at each of its meetings.
- The 4 May meeting had been the first to be attended by the university's new Pro Vice-Chancellor Education, Professor Susan Orr.
- Academic Board had discussed a wide range of issues, including the treatment of resit examinations for students with extenuating circumstances.
- It was felt that discussions at the meeting had been lively, and it was clear that debate and participation were welcomed which, it was agreed, evidenced positive developments in the culture of Academic Board over the past three years.



vi. De Montfort Students' Union

Items of note included:

- Elections for the union's Executive and Liberation Officers or 2022/23 had concluded in March, and elections to roles on the student council were underway.
- Representatives of the union had met with new independent governors and the governor apprentice as part of their induction programme.
- The introduction of the Joint Executive Committee had been well-received, and had begun to facilitate the development of a closer working relationship between the university and the students' union.
- The union intended to propose a number of changes to its Articles of Association and these would be submitted to the board for its consideration in due course.

RESOLVED:

That the updates be noted.

**115 Unconfirmed minutes of the 7 February 2022 meeting of the Audit Committee**

The minutes were noted.

**116 Unconfirmed minutes of the 17 February 2022 meeting of the Finance and Performance Committee**

The minutes were noted.

**117 Minutes of the 21 February 2022 meeting of the People and Culture Committee**

The minutes were noted.

**118 Minutes of the 23 February 2022 meeting of the Academic Board**

The minutes were noted.

**119 Items placed under the university seal since the previous meeting**

The report was noted.

**120 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. Although there had been some minor technical difficulties in the first few minutes of the meeting, it was felt that these had been overcome swiftly and that the hybrid approach had been successful on this occasion. However, the Chair indicated again his preference that all board meetings be conducted face-to-face and that governors should attend in-person unless there were circumstances that prevented them from doing so.

**121 Date of the next meeting**

The next meeting of the Board of Governors will take place at 10:00 on 7 July 2022 in The Yard, rooms 3.02 and 3.05.

**122 Any other business**

Summer graduation ceremonies

DMU's summer graduation ceremonies would take place from 22-27 August inclusive, and it was hoped that one of those ceremonies would include the formal investiture of Akram Khan MBE as the university's Chancellor. It was agreed that confirmation of the graduation schedule would be circulated to the board in due course and that governors would be asked to indicate where they would be available to attend a ceremony.

RESOLVED:

That the Governance Office would circulate to governors confirmation of the schedule of graduation ceremonies.

*Meeting duration: 10:00-12:51*