

Minutes:	Board of Governors strategic away day
Time and date:	10:00, Thursday 13 October 2022
Location:	The Yard, rooms 3.02, 3.05 and 3.06
Present:	Ian Squires (Chair), Peter Collyer, Stuart Dawkins, Jon Lees (until item 28), Jonathan Kerry, Jonathan Mills, Katie Normington, Shreeya Paudel, Sara Pierson, Aashni Sawjani, Bev Shears, Dan Toner and Paul Woodgates
In attendance:	<p>Jim Bowditch (Acting Director of Estates and Facilities) (item 29), Simon Bradbury (Pro Vice-Chancellor International) (items 21-26 and 28-32), David Bryan (Director of the Strategic Planning Service) (items 21-26 and 28-32), Andrew Bush (Director of Higher Education Internal Audit, KPMG) (item 28), Jo Cooke (Executive Director of Student and Academic Services) (items 21-26 and 28-32), Pete Cross (Chief Finance and Resources Officer), Helen Donnellan (Pro Vice-Chancellor Business and Regional Engagement) (items 21-26 and 28-32), Mel Fowler (Executive Director of Marketing and Communications) (items 21-26), Richard Greene (Deputy Vice-Chancellor), Tracey Jessup (Chief Transformation Officer) (items 21-26 and 28-32), Heather McLaughlin (Pro Vice-Chancellor Research and Academic Staff Development, Dean of Business and Law) (items 21-26 and 28-32), Simon Oldroyd (Pro Vice-Chancellor Sustainability and Dean of Health and Life Sciences) (items 21-26 and 28-32), Susan Orr (Pro Vice-Chancellor Education) (items 21-26), Shushma Patel (Pro Vice-Chancellor Student Experience and Dean of Computing, Engineering and Media) (items 21-26 and 28-32), Nikki Pierce (Registrar (Academic) and Secretary to the Board), Steve Smith (UK International Education Champion) (items 21-25), Sam Weston (Corporate Governance Manager)</p>
Secretary:	Nick Jeffs; nick.jeffs@dmu.ac.uk

CONFIRMED

21 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Catherine Clarke, Fiona Cownie, Buddy Penfold, Sardip Sandhu, Peter Tansley, Jill Cowley, and Kaushika Patel. Apologies for early departure had been received from Jon Lees, Mel Fowler and Susan Orr.

22 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.

23 Appointment of a second student governor

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

RESOLVED:

That the nomination of Ben Smith as the board's second student governor for the remainder of the 2022/23 academic year be approved. Ben's term would run from 13 October 2022 to 30 June 2023.

24 Internationalisation: higher education of the future

Professor Sir Steve Smith delivered a presentation concerning the current picture of, and future outlook for, internationalisation in higher education. The presentation focussed on a range of topics, including overseas recruitment, some of the political issues associated with universities' international operations, and transnational education (TNE). Arising from the discussion of this item, and questions from governors, the following points were highlighted:

- i. It was recognised that there was, and would continue to be, a multitude of opportunities in terms of TNE, and that international collaboration in higher education remained attractive to governments across the world.
- ii. It was agreed that it would be important for governing bodies, in partnership with the executive, to assess carefully the potential risks of those TNE opportunities and make a judgement, with the best interests of the institution in mind, as to which prospects should be pursued.
- iii. It was suggested that the quality of TNE, and the assurance processes that were in place to safeguard that quality, would be one of the key areas of concern to the UK government in terms of the sector's international operations.

RESOLVED:

That the presentation be noted.

25 DMU international update

The Pro Vice-Chancellor International delivered a presentation concerning the current status of the university's international operations, including financial performance as well as TNE activities. **[Redacted]** Arising from the discussion of this item, and questions from governors, the following points were highlighted:

- i. **[Redacted]**
- ii. **[Redacted]**
- iii. **[Redacted]**

RESOLVED:

That the presentation be noted.

26 Introduction to the digital strategy

The Chief Transformation Officer delivered a presentation concerning the development of the university's digital strategy. Subsequent to the presentation, those in attendance were divided into five groups to discuss questions focussed on 'must do's' from a governor's perspective, and the balance of investment between optimisation and transformation. Arising from the group discussions, the following points were highlighted:

- i. 'Must do's' should be focussed on improving the user experience.
- ii. It would be useful to take a view as to where technology might be used to make genuine improvements to the student experience, and that the case for making those improvements should be supported by data that demonstrated their value.
- iii. It would be useful to develop a set of principles and a framework to underpin digital transformation projects.
- iv. The university might focus on the optimisation of technology supporting block teaching and other elements of Education 2030.
- v. It would be important to ensure the university had appropriate capacity to effectively support digital transformation projects.

RESOLVED:

That the presentation be noted.

Mel Fowler and Susan Orr left the meeting at this point

27 Governance at DMU

The Registrar (Academic) and Secretary to the Board delivered a presentation concerning governance at DMU. Subsequent to the presentation, those in attendance were divided into three groups to discuss questions focussed on how the board might better understand and challenge the executive's delivery of the university strategy, and how the board might feel more assured that it heard the student voice. Arising from the group discussions, the following points were highlighted:

- i. It was suggested that data would be critical in helping the board to understand and challenge the delivery of the university strategy, particularly if that data was supported by commentary from the executive that highlighted any issues and identified any emerging or potential risks.
- ii. It would be useful for the board's committees to explore in detail certain elements of the strategy and the university's performance therein. However, it would be important to avoid overlap between committees and that it was made clear which committee would be exploring each of those elements.
- iii. Governors agreed that it would be important to ensure that the data shared with the board was pitched at an appropriate level of detail, and that discussions of that data were strategic rather than operational.
- iv. It was suggested that sharing with the board data from mid-term teaching evaluations, and data collected by the students' union, would be a useful way of 'hearing' aspects of the student voice between the annual National Student Survey. It would also be useful to introduce a feedback 'loop' so that students could be assured that their comments were being heard.
- v. It was suggested that exploring opportunities to seek 'unstructured' feedback from students would also be useful.

RESOLVED:

That the presentation be noted.

28 Commercial income in the higher education sector

Andrew Bush delivered a presentation concerning commercial income in the higher education sector. Arising from the discussion of this item, and questions from governors, the following points were highlighted:

- i. It was recognised that it would be critical for the university to continue to explore ways in which it might diversify its income streams, and that seeking to take advantage of appropriate commercial opportunities was one way in which this might be achieved.
- ii. It was suggested that the university might prefer to identify existing areas of expertise that might be leveraged for commercial gain rather than seeking to develop commercial opportunities from scratch.
- iii. It was recognised that it would be important for the university to have in place staff with the right skills to effectively develop commercial opportunities.
- iv. It would be important to develop colleagues' openness to, and awareness of, the idea of commercialisation. It was recognised that there was work to be done at DMU in this regard, but that steps had already been taken in the right direction with the appointment of a Professor of Enterprise who would be working on building commercial capacity and capability amongst academic staff at DMU.

RESOLVED:

That the presentation be noted.

Jon Lees left the meeting at this point

29 Estates development

The Vice-Chancellor introduced an item concerning the future development of the university's estate. Subsequent to that introduction, those present also received short presentations concerning: the existing campus masterplan; examples of health-related academic projects elsewhere in the sector; and the university's experience of working with local partners, including Leicester City Council and local providers of student accommodation.

Subsequent to these presentations, those in attendance were divided into five groups to discuss questions focussed on potential commercial and partnership activity, the balance of different types of space on campus, and the potential future acquisition of new space. Arising from the group discussions, the following points were highlighted:

- i. It was suggested that DMU might consider a small increase in the amount of university-owned accommodation although it was recognised that it would be important maintain a degree of flexibility in this area to account for changes in demand.
- ii. It would be important to understand any issues students might have with their accommodation so that improvements might be made for current and future residents.
- iii. It was agreed that it would be important to protect green spaces on campus.
- iv. The university should be keen to engage in useful, mutually beneficial partnerships that might be based around both the physical estate but also sharing technology.

- v. It was acknowledged that the development of high quality, specialist space, for example laboratories, might give the university a competitive edge, but it would be critical to be confident of the demand for programmes that utilised that space in order to ensure a return on investment.
- vi. It was suggested that the university explore ways in which it might develop its existing estate, particularly any buildings that were currently vacant, before considering the acquisition of new space.

RESOLVED:

That the presentation be noted.

30 Review of the board's performance

Members were content that the board had been effective in discharging its responsibilities. It was felt that all present had been enabled to be effective in their contribution and that there had been sufficient opportunities for the discussion of each agenda item. It was suggested that it would be useful to reflect on the length of the agenda for future strategic away days to ensure that a balance was struck between the amount of business being considered and the length of time allowed for the discussion of each item.

31 Date of the next meeting

As per item 32, a virtual extraordinary meeting of the Board of Governors would take place via MS Teams at a time to be confirmed in the morning of 20 October 2022.

The next ordinary meeting of the Board of Governors would take place at 10:00 on 24 November 2022 in Bede House, room 0.46.

32 Any other business

[Redacted]

Meeting duration: 10:00-16:34