

Minutes:	Board of Governors
Time and date:	Thursday 14 May 2026 at 10:00
Location:	DMU London, The Amp, room 6.13
Present:	Ian Squires (Chair), Stuart Dawkins, Justin Dobson, Phil Grierson, Vivek Ganotra (from item 121), Dilpreet Kaur, Jonathan Kerry (except item 130), Catherine Njoroge, Katie Normington, Sardip Sandhu, Beverley Shears, Shikha Singh (to item 127), Peter Tansley, Rama Thirunamachandran, and Paul Woodgates
In attendance:	Alison Benson, Deputy Secretary and Head of Compliance, Shreena Dasani, Governor Apprentice, Chloe Keenan, Governance Officer, Johnny Morris, Global Marketing Officer (items 123 and 125), Debbie Muddimer, Executive Director of Finance and Procurement, Nikki Pierce, Registrar (Academic) and Secretary to the Board, Lisa Stansbie, Deputy Vice-Chancellor Education, Equalities and Student Experience (item 127)
Secretary:	Nick Jeffs; nick.jeffs@dmu.ac.uk

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116 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Tamera Campbell, Alison Court, Jonathan Mills, Abdul Mullick, Patrick Moody and Twig Smalley. Apologies for a late arrival had been received from Vivek Ganotra. Apologies for an early departure had been received from Shikha Singh.

117 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.

118 Minutes of previous meetings

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the 5 March 2026 meeting [118a] and the 27 April 2026 extraordinary meeting [118b] be approved.

119 Matters arising

The listed matters arising [119] had either been completed prior to the meeting or were scheduled for consideration at a future meeting of the board.

120 Report from the Chair

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

- i. The Chair and the Vice-Chancellor had met with the DfE to discuss student loans fraud, which was an issue that had affected the wider sector. It had been recognised that the level of loans fraud at DMU had been comparatively low and continued to decrease.
- ii. The Chair, Vice-Chancellor and Executive Director of Finance and Performance were scheduled to meet with the OfS in June to discuss risk.
- iii. The search for a new Chancellor for DMU continued; the Chair would be speaking to a potential candidate in June.
- iv. Following an interview, Jonathan Kerry had been recommended for the role of Senior Independent Governor. The board would be asked to approve Jonathan's appointment later in the agenda under item 130.
- v. Governors were reminded of their invitation to join the formal launch event for the DMU London campus, which would be taking place following the meeting at 16:00.

RESOLVED:

That the update be noted.

Vivek Ganotra joined the meeting at this point

121 Report from the Vice-Chancellor

The Vice-Chancellor introduced a report [121] 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 university apologised for the late cancellation of the Audit and Risk Committee that had been due to take place on 20 April. It was acknowledged that the cancellation had been unfortunate and the university recognised that governors gave considerable time to the work of the committees. It was noted that additional resource had been put in place to help address the multiple concurrent regulatory pressures, which had contributed to the cancellation, and the university assured governors that such a cancellation would not happen again.
- ii. It was noted that the university's Dubai campus had reopened following the ceasefire that had been called between the US and Iran in early April. Application and conversion rates remained satisfactory and it was anticipated that performance in these areas would pick up as the local situation continued to improve.
- iii. It was noted that the risks around UKVI compliance continued to be significant and it was felt that the tightening of the basic compliance assessment metrics, and a rise in visa refusal rates, was likely to have a significant impact on international recruitment.
- iv. It was recognised that the sector was seeing an increased use of regulation across multiple different areas. It was felt that this might amount to 'policy by stealth' in some cases but also, equally, that it might be different regulatory bodies acting independently without a clear overarching direction in terms of policy.
- v. It was recognised that the cumulative nature of the risks and regulatory burdens currently facing the university made them significantly more challenging to manage than if each had been faced in isolation. It was acknowledged that,

although the potential impact of each risk varied, all of them had to be addressed and that resource would be required to do so effectively. It was agreed that it would be useful for the board to receive updates on the university's risk environment at each of its meetings and that the university should give some thought as to how it might articulate the cumulative impact of the risks being faced by the institution.

- vi. The board welcomed DMU's joining of the University Alliance group, recognising the benefits of doing so in terms of advocacy and information sharing.
- vii. It was noted that the university's Campus Masterplan was being reviewed in light of the current financial challenges.
- viii. **[Redacted]**

RESOLVED:

- a. That the report be noted.
- b. That the board to receive updates on the university's risk environment at each of its meetings.

122 Report from the Student Governors

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

- i. The students' union had submitted a response to the consultation on the Committee of University Chairs' revised Higher Education Code of Governance.
- ii. The 'DSU Celebrates 2026' event had been well attended and it was agreed that governors would be invited to such events in future.
- iii. The union had completed the refresh of its strategy, which would now cover the years 2026-2029. It was noted that the refreshed strategy would be considered by the union's Trustee Board in June and formally presented to the university thereafter.
- iv. The union was working with DMU to plan welcome events for new students arriving in September.
- v. Union colleagues had undertaken visits to the DMU London campus and the union's Advice Team had been engaging directly with DMU London students. It was noted that the Dubai campus operated its own local arrangements.
- vi. Noting that their terms would end on 30 June, and that this would be their final board meeting, the board thanked the student governors for their contributions over the past year, as well as the union's Chief Executive Officer who had worked hard to foster a strong and effective working relationship with the university.

RESOLVED:

That the update be noted.

123 Recruitment and admissions update

The Global Head of Marketing introduced a report [123] 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. **[Redacted]**
- ii. The board discussed the potential to leverage DMU London as a means of supporting recruitment to the Leicester campus. **[Redacted]** It was noted that the

business case for DMU London would be refreshed to reflect the changing context in which the university was operating, and it was agreed that an update would be provided at the next meeting.

- iii. **[Redacted]**
- iv. It was noted that the university's approach to marketing would need to be tailored to each of its campuses and target audiences. It was recognised that, whilst this approach would introduce a degree of complexity, it would also improve the relevance and impact of the university's recruitment efforts. It was agreed that this tailored approach should still be underpinned by a consistent set of core values shared across all of the university's activities.
- v. The board encouraged the university to make liberal use of its achievements and USPs, such as its performance in league tables, awards, and facilities such as its trading floor.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

124 Medium-Term Financial Plan update

The Executive Director of Finance and Procurement introduced a report [124] and delivered a presentation concerning an update on the university's Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP), and the Vice-Chancellor delivered a presentation concerning the 'Thinking Beyond Us' programme. The Chair of the Finance and Performance Committee then provided an outline of that committee's discussion of these items, highlighting the need for the university to move away from a recurring cycle of deficit management and emphasising the urgency of progressing the initiatives within the Thinking Beyond Us programme. Arising from the discussion of this item, and questions from members of the committee, the following points were highlighted:

- i. The board acknowledged that the university had responded rapidly to changing and challenging circumstances, and commended its proactive, forward-looking approach, as well as its performance to date in terms of finding cost reductions.
- ii. It was recognised that the next few years were likely to remain financially challenging both for DMU and the wider higher education environment. It was felt that the current pressures represent a systemic issue across the sector and that to date there had been little in the way of government intervention aimed at improving the situation. It was agreed that leaders within the sector would need to continue to highlight this issue, and its potential impact, to government.
- iii. In discussing future approaches to cost reductions, it was suggested that the university would need to take a balanced approach to ensure that key institutional strengths were maintained and that the core elements that defined DMU were protected. The university was also encouraged to understand the strategies being adopted by other institutions in an increasingly more competitive landscape.
- iv. The board strongly encouraged the university to be more ambitious in the pace of its response to the financial challenges outlined in the report, and the executive was challenged to think about how it could increase its capacity to accelerate both the development and delivery of its strategic initiatives, including those within the Thinking Beyond Us programme.
- v. The board discussed how governors might be able to better support the Thinking Beyond Us programme. It was suggested that the Finance and Performance Committee could also be used as an open forum to support the evolution of the programme, potentially via an 'away day' format that would be open to other governors also, where the focus would be on development and discussion rather

than decision-making. It was agreed that the Chair of the Board, Deputy Chair of the Board, and the Vice-Chancellor would meet separately to discuss how best to progress this approach.

- vi. It was noted that the university expected its Moody's credit rating to be downgraded at the next review, noting that the financial context for both DMU and the broader sector would make it difficult to maintain its current rating.
- vii. It was agreed that two reports: 'Financial sustainability of higher education providers in England: 2026' from the OfS, and 'Higher Education and Funding: Threat of Insolvency and International Students' from the House of Commons' Education Committee would be shared with the board following the meeting

RESOLVED:

- a. That the report and presentations be noted.
- b. That the reports from the OfS and the House of Commons' Education Committee would be shared with the board following the meeting.

125 Strategy refresh update

The Vice-Chancellor and the Global Marketing Officer introduced a report [125] 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 refreshed strategy would be aligned with the aims of the Thinking Beyond Us programme discussed in the previous item.
- ii. The board highlighted the need for the university to be mindful of the additional capacity required to deliver the refreshed strategy at a time when institutional resources were already stretched.
- iii. The board provided feedback on the visual identity options shown in the presentation, acknowledging that governors were not the primary target audience and that their views represented one perspective within the university's broader community of stakeholders.
- iv. The board welcomed the involvement of industry partners in the development of the strategy through advisory boards, and it was noted that the university continued to explore opportunities to develop direct relationships with employers.
- v. It was noted that the board would be asked to approve the final version of the refreshed strategy at its meeting on 2 July 2026.

RESOLVED:

- a. That the engagement and development process that had shaped the emerging refreshed strategy be noted.
- b. That the proposed top-level strategy articulation and four impact domains be noted.
- c. That the two visual identity options developed in-house by the Marketing and Communications directorate be noted.
- d. That delivery planning, KPIs, monitoring, and risk arrangements would form part of the final strategy package be noted.
- e. That the final version of the strategy would be considered by the Academic Board in June and the Board of Governors in July be noted.

126 DMU Dubai: scenario analysis and financial risk mitigation

The Executive Director of Finance and Procurement introduced a report [126] concerning a scenario analysis for the 2026/27 academic year for DMU Dubai, which had been developed in response to the escalation of regional geopolitical tensions since February 2026. Arising from the discussion of this item, and questions from members of the committee, the following points were highlighted:

- i. In discussing the potential for the university to seek rent relief on its Dubai campus, it was noted that the landlord, TECOM, had been supportive of this in the past and, therefore, the board felt it worthwhile to pursue such a request.
- ii. In discussing other potential financial mitigations, it was noted that the university could consider redirecting some students to the Dubai campus who might otherwise have studied in the UK but were unable to do so due to visa constraints. It was noted that, whilst UKVI metrics would not apply to student studying at the Dubai campus, there were local regulatory requirements and metrics that would still need to be observed.

RESOLVED:

- a. That the 2026/27 academic year scenario analysis undertaken in response to the escalation of regional geopolitical tensions in the Middle East since February 2026, as outlined in the report, be noted.
- b. That the adoption of the 'Managed Stability' scenario as the central planning case for 2026/27, with increasing contingency planning aligned to the 'Persistent Friction' scenario, be noted.
- c. That the continuation of the hiring and capital expenditure freeze across 2026/27 be noted.
- d. That the risks associated with the Persistent Friction scenario would be monitored directly by the Executive Director of Finance and Procurement and the Dubai Leadership Team on a monthly basis be noted.

127 Student experience tracker 2026

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor Education, Equalities and Student Experience introduced a report [127] and delivered a presentation concerning the results of the 2025/26 Student Experience Tracker. Arising from the discussion of this item, and questions from members of the committee, the following points were highlighted:

- i. It was noted that the response rate of 12% for this survey was consistent with previous years. It was suggested that 'survey fatigue' would likely be a contributing factor to the low response rate, with students also being asked to complete end-of-block and end-of-module surveys as they progressed through their studies.
- ii. The board welcomed the report, including its recommendations, and reinforced the importance of measuring the effectiveness and impact of initiatives aimed at improving the student experience.
- iii. It was suggested that it would be useful for the university to explore whether it might conduct any benchmarking to better understand its own performance relative to that of the rest of the sector.

RESOLVED:

That the report and presentation be noted.

128 Regulatory update

The Registrar (Academic) and Secretary to the Board introduced a report [128] concerning update on a range of regulatory matters relevant to the university. Arising from the discussion of this item, and questions from members of the committee, the following points were highlighted:

- i. **[Redacted]** The university had also written to local MPs to raise awareness of the potential impact on Leicester and Leicestershire of a dramatic reduction in international student numbers at DMU.
- ii. The board welcomed and approved the proposed approach to the reporting of matters relating to subcontracted provision to the Audit and Risk Committee (compliance and assurance), the Finance and Performance Committee (performance), and the board (annual oversight).
- iii. It was noted that the OfS was currently holding a consultation around a new condition of registration focussed on consumer and student protection. It was felt that the proposed protections could extend beyond the requirements of existing consumer law, suggesting potential overreach on the part of the regulator. The consultation would close in July and it was expected that the new condition of registration would be implemented from September 2026. DMU would be responding to the consultation and it was suggested that the OfS was likely to see a significant number of responses from across the sector.
- iv. The board discussed the longer-term regulatory environment, including the potential impact of future political change. It was recognised that regulatory priorities were likely to vary significantly between political parties and it was noted that sector think tanks were actively exploring a range of different potential scenarios. It was suggested that it would be useful for the university to monitor in particular how future policy and regulatory developments might affect transnational education, including the potential for increased complexity or constraint.

RESOLVED:

- a. That the report be noted.
- b. That the proposal for oversight of subcontracted provision i.e. that Audit and Risk Committee focus on compliance and assurance, that the Finance and Performance Committee focus on performance, and that the board receive an annual oversight report, be approved.

129 Member's updates

- i. Audit and Risk Committee

It was noted that the Audit and Risk Committee meeting scheduled for 20 April 2026 had been cancelled. Items of business that had been scheduled for that meeting would instead be considered at the next meeting on 8 June 2026. It was noted that the June meeting would also include a report on the outcomes of the lessons learned exercise that was being conducted with regards SAP. This report would then be considered by the board at its meeting on 2 July 2026.

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 April 2026, had already been considered by the board earlier in the agenda. In addition, it was noted that the committee had considered a business case in support of part of the SAP Futures programme, and a discussion with representatives of JP Morgan regarding the university's investment portfolio.

iii. People and Culture Committee

The People and Culture Committee had last met on 23 March 2026. Key items of business that had been considered by the committee included the more recent employee relations casework report, the annual report on the university's pay gaps, and the approval in principle that the committee seek a co-opted member to bolster its membership.

iv. Academic Board

The Academic Board had last met on 6 May 2026. Key items of business that had been considered by the board included an update on the student retention project, a discussion of the university's attendance monitoring policy, and the consideration of policies relating to lecture capture and DMU's virtual learning environment.

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 potential future collaborations with Leicester College, the university's first cohort of Higher Technical Qualifications students, who would start their studies in September, and the university's intention to conduct an end-to-end review of its apprenticeships provision.

RESOLVED:

That the updates be noted.

Jonathan Kerry departed the meeting for the following item

130

Secretary's report

The Registrar (Academic) and Secretary to the Board introduced a report [130] concerning a proposal that the university seek a co-opted member to join the People and Culture Committee, and the proposed appointment of Jonathan Kerry to the role of the board's Senior Independent Governor following an interview process.

RESOLVED:

- a. That the proposal that the university seek a co-opted member to join the People and Culture Committee be approved in principle.
- b. That the appointment of Jonathan Kerry to the role of Senior Independent Governor, effective immediately, be approved.

Jonathan Kerry returned to the meeting at this point

131 Unconfirmed minutes of the 2 February 2026 meeting of the Audit and Risk Committee

RESOLVED:

That the minutes [131] be noted.

132 Minutes of the 23 February 2026 meeting of the Finance and Performance Committee

RESOLVED:

That the minutes [132] be noted.

133 Minutes of the 29 January 2026 meeting of the People and Culture Committee

RESOLVED:

That the minutes [133] be noted.

134 Unconfirmed minutes of the 23 March 2026 meeting of the People and Culture Committee

RESOLVED:

That the minutes [134] be noted.

135 Harassment and Sexual Misconduct: Implementation of Office for Students Condition of Registration E6

RESOLVED:

That the minutes [135] be noted.

136 Minutes of the 25 February 2026 meeting of the Academic Board

RESOLVED:

That the minutes [136] be noted.

137 Conclusion of Prevent monitoring

RESOLVED:

That the report [137] be noted.

138 Appendices to the regulatory update report (item 128)

RESOLVED:

That the appendices [128] be noted.

139 Items placed under the university seal

RESOLVED:

That the report be [139] be noted.

140 Board and committee dates for 2026/27 and 2027/28

RESOLVED:

That the dates [140] be noted.

141 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.

142 Date of the next meeting

The next meeting of the Board of Governors would take place at 10:00 on Thursday 2 July 2026 in The Yard, rooms 3.02 and 3.05.

143 Any other business

No items were raised.

Meeting duration: 10:00-14:29