

<b>Minutes:</b>	Board of Governors
<b>Time and Date:</b>	10:00, Thursday, 19 October 2023
<b>Location:</b>	The Yard, rooms 3.05 and 3.06
<b>Present:</b>	Ian Squires (Chair), Peter Collyer, Stuart Dawkins, Phil Grierson, Amir Iqbal, Priya Karasala, Jonathan Kerry, Jonathan Mills, Patrick Moody, Abdul Mullick, Katie Normington, Buddy Penfold, Sardip Sandhu, Beverley Shears, Shikha Singh, Peter Tansley and Paul Woodgates
<b>In attendance:</b>	Ahmad Alhusan, Executive Director of Strategic Planning Services Simon Bradbury, Pro Vice-Chancellor International Anne-Marie Canning, CEO of the Brilliant Club (item 32) Jill Cowley, Pro Vice-Chancellor Skills and Training and Dean of Arts, Design and Humanities Mark Corver, Managing Director and co-founder of dataHE (item 29) Bridget Donoghue, Executive Director of People Services Melanie Fowler, Executive Director of Marketing and Communications Richard Greene, Deputy Vice-Chancellor Tracey Jessup, Chief Transformation Officer Mike Kagioglou, Pro Vice-Chancellor Research and Business Innovation Heather McLaughlin, Pro Vice-Chancellor Academic Staff Development and Dean of Business and Law Debbie Muddimer, Executive Director of Finance and Procurement Shushma Patel, Pro Vice-Chancellor Student Experience and Dean of Computing, Engineering and Media Nikki Pierce, Registrar (Academic) / Secretary to the Board
<b>Secretary:</b>	Governance Office, 0116 257 7516, clerksoffice@dmu.ac.uk

*CONFIRMED*

**27**      **Welcome and apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence had been received from Alison Court, Vivek Ganotra, Simon Oldroyd, Susan Orr and Dan Toner. Apologies for late arrival had been received from Jill Cowley.

The Chair of the Board welcomed the newly appointed independent governors to their first board meeting.

**28**      **Declaration of any pecuniary, family or other personal interests in relation to the agenda**

No other 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.

**29**      **Student recruitment trends**

Dr Mark Corver, co-founder and Managing Director of dataHE, delivered a presentation concerning student recruitment trends and analysis of institutional and sector data

around recruitment activity. The presentation considered the university's current position and performance against competitors, as well as a wider analysis of the whole sector and consideration of the future of student recruitment. Arising from the discussion of this item, and questions from governors, the following points were highlighted:

- i. It was noted that the 2023/24 recruitment process had experienced record proportions of re-applicants (19-20 year olds) who, for various reasons, may not have been successful in their previous applications(s). There were some barriers for re-applicants such as fees for each application to the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) which risked deterring potential applicants experiencing financial hardship.
- ii. It was noted that many universities were managing the impact of inflation on student fees income through the staff-to-student ratio i.e. more students for the same number of academic staff. However, this risked impacting the student experience as students would potentially receive less face-to-face time with academic staff.
- iii. Across the sector, there was an understanding that the current system of financing higher education was no longer fit for purpose, and that future policy activity would likely shift the costs onto graduates, with a focus on pricing courses differently.
- iv. Concerning the drop in participation, the board queried the impact of the cost of living crisis on potential students and whether concerns such as maintenance loans not keeping up with inflation had led potential students to not apply. The data on recruitment across the sector showed that demand trends remained the same across all backgrounds, irrespective of socio-economic position and so it was unlikely that the cost of living crisis had been a major factor in lower applicant numbers.

RESOLVED:

That the presentation be noted.

### **30 'Is small beautiful?': a strategy around size**

The Vice-Chancellor delivered a presentation concerning the university's strategy around the size of the institution and the future of recruitment. Arising from the discussion of this item, and questions from governors, the following points were highlighted:

- i. In previous years, the sector had made long-term plans based on the increasing population of 18-year-olds, however there had been a shift in the behaviours of this demographic away from university attendance. Therefore, the higher education sector had been forced to reconsider their strategic direction around shape and size.
- ii. Across the sector, overseas recruitment continued to be the primary funding mechanism for most institutions and so international expansion would likely continue to increase.
- iii. The sector would likely see a slow in expenditure and reduction in capital investment in plans to mitigate reduced student numbers. However, digital transformation work to reduce costs would need investment.

RESOLVED:

That the presentation be noted.

### 31 **Size and shape of the university**

Following item 30, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and the Pro Vice-Chancellor International, delivered a presentation and a workshop concerning the size and shape of DMU. It was noted that the university was in a strong position compared to other similar institutions, however the ultimate aim would be to find a local, regional, national and international niche for which DMU could be successful and attract applicants. Governors and ULB members were asked to consider the following:

- i. In light of the risks in the sector, what adjustments, if any, should we make to the balance of our student types (home, international, transnational education (TNE))?
- ii. Which Global Grand Challenges and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) should DMU address and why?

**[Redacted]**

RESOLVED:

That the presentation be noted.

### 32 **Access and participation**

Anne-Marie Canning MBE, Chief Executive Officer of the Brilliant Club delivered a presentation concerning access and participation in higher education and how the sector may address participation gaps and encourage activity across all socioeconomic backgrounds. Arising from the discussion of this item, and questions from governors, the following points were highlighted:

- i. It was noted that socioeconomic backgrounds played a part in pay gaps in employment after university. Wealthier graduates were more likely to be able to hold out for a desired job role and be financially supported elsewhere, whilst poorer graduates were more likely to take up employment offers more quickly, even if at a lower starting salary, to make ends meet.
- ii. More development could be done to provide home students with 'academic preparedness' to support the transition to university. This would aim increase a sense of belonging at university before attending, which would support students with limited knowledge of life in higher education.
- iii. In recent years, government policy had equated a good quality degree to salary outcomes at graduate level. The board noted that some degrees, such as the arts and humanities, would be unlikely to produce the same graduate salaries as other courses, such as engineering and computing. Therefore, the sector would need to continue to emphasise how degrees could be lifechanging, even if some courses did not produce highly paid graduate roles.
- iv. The board noted the importance of the parent/guardian role for students and the value of ensuring that parents are aware of how the university is supporting students.

RESOLVED:

That the presentation be noted.

### 33 **Access and participation**

Following item 32, the Pro Vice-Chancellor Student Experience and the Executive Director of Marketing and Communications delivered a presentation and a workshop concerning the university's Access and Participation Plan (APP). Governors and ULB members reviewed the OfS Equality of Opportunity Risk Register (EORR) 12 sector-

wide risks that may affect a student's opportunity to access and succeed in higher education, and were asked to consider which EORR risks should be prioritised for DMU's APP activity. Arising from the discussion of this item, the following points were highlighted:

- i. Access (risks 1-5)
  - a. Risk 1 (knowledge and skills) recognised the important of removing barriers to course access.
  - b. Risk 2 (information and guidance) was noted as important as, with the right level of information, more people would be encouraged to apply to university. This included the issue of lacking social capital such as not having friends/family who had been to university and may act as encouragement to apply. Consideration should be given on how to motivate individuals that they have the option to attend university.
  - c. As reflected in item 32 on the agenda, Risk 3 (perception of HE) would include the impact of parent/guardian awareness concerning the perception of HE. Having an engaged parent/guardian would act as encouragement to prospective students.
  - d. Risk 4 (application success rates) recognised that access to HE was not a level playing field and so consideration should be given for making allowances to improve this.
- ii. On course (risks 6-11)
  - a. Risk 6 (insufficient academic support) was noted as important to tackle imposter syndrome, particularly for first generation students attending university. Support should be given to students to help them transition into HE and feel comfortable in the environment. Furthermore, prior experiences of education may differ and so extra support on arrival at university may be required to bring students up to the level of their peers and continue to thrive.
  - b. Risk 8 (mental health) was highlighted as important to ensure that students had access to support before a crisis occurred. Support to students was vital to ensure positive outcomes.
- iii. Progression (risk 12)
  - a. Risk 12 (progression to further study) was felt to be a limiting description for progression, and focus should instead be on the university supporting students finishing and reaching the next stage of their lives, whether further study, a work placement, graduate role etc.

**[Redacted]**

**[Redacted]**

RESOLVED:

That the presentation be noted.

#### **34 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.

#### **35 Date of the next meeting**

The next meeting of the Board of Governors would take place at 10:00 on 30 November 2023 in The Yard, on campus at De Montfort University.

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**Any other business**

No items were raised.

*Meeting duration: 10:00-15:30*