

Minutes:	Board of Governors
Time and date:	10:00, Thursday 25 September 2025
Location:	The Yard, rooms 3.05 and 3.06
Present:	Ian Squires (Chair), Alison Court, Stuart Dawkins, Phil Grierson, Dilpreet Kaur, Jonathan Kerry, Jonathan Mills, Abdul Mullick, Catherine Njoroge, Katie Normington, Beverley Shears (except items 15-21), Shikha Singh, Twig Smalley, Peter Tansley, and Paul Woodgates
In attendance:	Alasdair Blair, Interim Pro Vice-Chancellor Education and Student Experience (items 9 and 10), Shreena Dasani, Governor Apprentice, John Hurst, Director of Strategic Planning and Insight (items 9, 10 and 11), Debbie Muddimer, Executive Director of Finance and Procurement, Nikki Pierce, Registrar (Academic) and Secretary to the Board
Secretary:	Nick Jeffs; nick.jeffs@dmu.ac.uk

CONFIRMED

1 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Tamera Campbell, Vivek Ganatra, Patrick Moody, and Sardip Sandhu.

2 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.

3 Minutes of previous meeting

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the 10 July 2025 [3] meeting of the Board of Governors be approved.

4 Matters arising

The matters arising [4] had either been completed prior to the meeting or were scheduled for consideration at a future meeting of the board.

5 Report from the Chair

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

- i. The Chair noted that the university had continued to progress its change programme, which included ongoing work to restructure a limited number of academic roles in certain areas based on staff:student ratios. It was noted that the Vice-Chancellor had made a commitment that there would be no redundancies amongst academic staff during the 2025/26 academic year.
- ii. Governors were reminded of a planned tour of De Montfort Students' Union, which would be led by the two student governors.

RESOLVED:

That the update be noted.

6 Report from the Vice-Chancellor

The Vice-Chancellor introduced a report [6] 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 Office for Students (OfS) was doing more to understand individual institutions' financial health, and that their engagement with DMU in this area had been informal with the university providing assurance around its response to the challenges facing the sector.
- ii. It was noted that, although not a concern for DMU, some institutions were close to breaching – or had already breached – covenants with banks. It was felt that this had the potential to affect universities' ability to borrow from banks in the future, and it was recognised that some institutions would likely have difficulties with their external audits, particularly in terms of the 'going concern' statement.
- iii. It was noted that DMU felt well-placed to respond to the OfS consultation around students registered on courses delivered through subcontractual arrangements.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

7 Report from the Student Governors

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

- i. Welcome Week was underway and had so far seen an increase in footfall compared to the previous year, with over 3,000 new students attending the Welcome Fair on 23 and 24 September. Events held as part of Welcome Week had been well received and the numbers of students joining university societies and clubs had so far been positive. The students' union would be seeking feedback from new students on how it might make improvements to Welcome Week in future.
- ii. The union's external audit was ongoing and was expected to be completed on schedule.
- iii. The union would be gathering feedback during the first term around student wellbeing, noting the potential impact on students of global politics.
- iv. The union was working towards a refresh of its strategy, which would include a greater focus on commuter students. It was noted that the union had already held an away day focussed on the refresh.

RESOLVED:

That the update be noted.

8 2024/25 financial outturn update

The Executive Director of Finance and Procurement introduced a report [8] concerning the university's financial position as at 31 July 2025. The Chair of the Finance and Performance Committee provided a summary of that committee's discussion of the draft outturn position at its meeting on 18 September 2025. Arising from the discussion of this item, and questions from governors, the following points were highlighted:

- i. It was noted that, at its meeting on 18 September 2025, the Finance and Performance Committee had requested that the university revisit its budget and Medium-term Financial Plan in light of the updated position in terms of student registrations. This revised budget would be considered by the committee at its meeting on 18 November and the board at its meeting on 27 November.
- ii. In discussing asset impairments, it was noted that the university would be required to account for any adjustments to the valuation of buildings during the 2024/25 academic year. The new Director of Estates would consider whether the university might conduct more frequent valuations of its assets and whether it was depreciating its assets appropriately.
- iii. It was suggested that the university's performance in terms of research and enterprise income had been affected by the competitive nature of the funding environment and the difficulty of winning grants, particularly given DMU's focus on competing for larger grants.
- iv. It was noted that commission for international agents was likely to increase, and that the university was currently reviewing the cost of acquisition associated with overseas recruitment. It was recognised that this was a competitive market, and that agents helped to add volume to the university's recruitment efforts, but that volume carried its own risks, particularly in terms of forthcoming changes to UKVI Basic Compliance Assessment metrics.
- v. It was noted that external audit work was underway and appeared to be on course for formal reporting to the Audit and Risk Committee in November and the Board of Governors in December as part of the Annual Financial Return to the OfS.

RESOLVED:

- a. [Redacted]
- b. [Redacted]
- c. That an outstanding issue in respect of asset impairment and its potential impact on the reported deficit position be noted.
- d. That the key financial highlights as set out in the report be noted.
- e. That the operating cash liquidity days as at 31 July 2025 of six months, which was in line with the university's KPI for this area, be noted.

9 National Student Survey 2025 results

The Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor Education, and the Director of Strategic Planning and Insight, introduced a report [9] concerning DMU's performance in the 2025 National Student Survey (NSS). Arising from the discussion of this item, and questions from governors, the following points were highlighted:

- i. The board welcomed the university's improving trajectory in its NSS results. It was noted that this was the first year in which students who had been taught via block teaching had completed the survey although this did not yet extend to all faculties.
- ii. It was noted that the response rate continued to be positive albeit with a slight decrease compared to the previous year.
- iii. It was noted that the university had already begun to work with areas whose performance required improvement. It was felt that this work had been received positively by colleagues who had engaged with the improvement process in a constructive manner. The university was also looking at best practice across the sector as a way of helping to inform improvements in its own practice, for example in personal tutoring where it would be making clearer the distinction between pastoral care and academic support.
- iv. It was noted that the university would be working more closely with the students' union to help launch, and reinforce the importance of, the NSS amongst final-year students.
- v. It was noted that the benchmarks against which the university was measured in the NSS were provided annually by the OfS and based on the demographics of DMU's student body. The university had queried its benchmarks with the OfS as it was felt that some had been set higher than those for similar cohorts of students at competitor institutions.

RESOLVED:

- a. That the latest results of the 2025 NSS, including DMU's performance relative to its competitors and the sector, be noted.
- b. That the proposed 'Enhanced Monitoring' and 'Fast Track' plans for NSS 2025, including the planned actions and governance arrangements, be approved.
- c. That the proposal that oversight of NSS performance and monitoring continue to be routed through the Academic Quality Committee and the Education Committee be endorsed.

10 Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey 2025 results

The Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor Education, and the Director of Strategic Planning and Insight, introduced a report [10] concerning DMU's performance in the 2025 Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES). Arising from the discussion of this item, and questions from governors, the following points were highlighted:

- i. It was recognised that the work around improving the experience of postgraduate taught students was becoming increasingly important as that cohort of students continued to grow.
- ii. It was noted that the response rate of 7% was very low and would, therefore, have implications for the statistical accuracy of the results. It was noted that the response rate for the PTES was historically lower than for the NSS, for example, and that the PTES was harder to monitor through the lifetime of the survey. However, it was recognised that the university would need to take steps to improve its response rate in future.
- iii. It was suggested that the university might explore working with the students' union as a means of improving engagement with the survey.
- iv. It was suggested that the PTES might not play a significant role in decisions taken by applicants when choosing where to study in the UK. It was felt that the International Student Barometer, a survey of international students conducted across the world, held more weight but that its results would be difficult to compare with the results of the PTES as they examined different cohorts of students.

RESOLVED:

- a. That the results of the 2025 PTES, with particular reference to DMU's performance at theme level, be noted.
- b. That the low response rate to the survey, and the implications for statistical accuracy, be noted.
- c. That the proposed action plan for improvement in the university's performance in the PTES, as well as the continued oversight of PTES by the Academic Quality Committee and the Education Committee, be approved.

11 Student outcomes data (OfS B3 update)

The Director of Strategic Planning and Insight introduced a report [11] concerning an overview of the university's 2025 student outcomes metrics (OfS condition of registration B3). Arising from the discussion of this item, and questions from governors, the following points were highlighted:

- i. It was recognised that issues relating to continuation from DMU International College (DMUIC) continued to have a significant impact on the university's overall continuation metrics. However, it was noted that the outcomes metrics covered 2022/23 entrants into 2023/24 and therefore did not yet reflect the mitigating actions that had been taken since to improve the DMUIC position.
- ii. It was noted that the university continued to provide support to students to encourage continuation, including early intervention where individuals were identified as falling short of expected levels of attendance.
- iii. It was recognised that outcomes metrics would continue to be important in future, particularly in light of proposed changes to the thresholds in the UKVI Basic Compliance Assessment.
- iv. It was suggested that it would be useful for a further update to be shared with the board at its meeting in November, which would focus in more depth on the work that the university was doing to improve its continuation metrics.

RESOLVED:

- a. That the latest results of OfS B3 student outcomes data, including the university's decline in terms of its continuation metric, be noted.
- b. That the risk of a below-threshold continuation metric in the 2026 data release be noted.
- c. That the enhancement and monitoring actions being undertaken, as outlined in the report, be noted.
- d. That a further update on the university's student outcomes data would be shared with the board at a future meeting.

12 [Redacted]

13 Annual Report from lead governors for Ofsted

The Registrar (Academic) and Secretary to the Board, and the lead governors for Ofsted and skills, Stuart Dawkins and Jonathan Kerry, introduced a report [13] concerning an overview of the activities of the lead governors during the 2024/25 academic year. Arising from the discussion of this item, and questions from governors, the following points were highlighted:

- i. The board welcomed the report, noting that it was a useful summary of the work undertaken by the lead governors during the previous academic year.
- ii. It was noted that it was coming up to three years since Ofsted had last visited the university and that the likelihood of a further inspection would increase from January 2027.
- iii. It was recognised that there was the potential for this area to grow with the introduction at DMU of HTQs.

RESOLVED:

That the activities undertaken by the lead governors, as outlined in the report, be noted.

14 Member's updates

i. Audit and Risk Committee

The Audit and Risk Committee had not met since the board's last meeting on 10 July 2024, therefore there was no update to provide.

ii. Finance and Performance Committee

The Chair of the Finance and Performance Committee noted that a number items from its most recent meeting, which had taken place on 18 September 2025, had already been considered by the board earlier in the agenda. In addition, it was noted that the committee had considered:

- An annual review of the DMU's insurance arrangements, noting that the university had reduced its premiums when compared to the previous year's renewals.
- An update on the university's treasury management activities for the 12 months to 31 July 2025, noting that JP Morgan would be joining the committee at its November meeting to discuss DMU's investment portfolio.

iii. People and Culture Committee

The People and Culture Committee had not met since the board's last meeting on 10 July 2024, therefore there was no update to provide.

iv. Lead governors for Ofsted and skills

The annual report from the lead governors for Ofsted and skills had been considered at item 13. In light of this, there was no further update to provide.

v. Academic Board

The Academic Board had not met since the board's last meeting on 10 July 2025, therefore there was no update to provide. However, it was noted that the unconfirmed minutes of the 25 June 2025 meeting of the Academic Board were included at item 18.

RESOLVED:

That the updates be noted.

Beverley Shears left the meeting at this point

15 Annual governor appraisal process for 2024/25

The Chair of the Board introduced a report [15] concerning the outcomes of appraisal meetings held with governors during summer 2025, as well as a proposed training and development plan for the 2025/26 academic year, which had been informed by those appraisal meetings. Arising from the discussion of this item, and questions from governors, the following points were highlighted:

- i. It was noted that there were two appraisal meetings outstanding and that feedback from those conversations would be fed into the proposed training and development plan as appropriate.
- ii. It was noted that the university was developing a 'Governor Engagement Framework' – a recommendation of the Halpin governance effectiveness review – which would allow governors further opportunities for development in their role. The engagement framework would be shared with the board at a future meeting

RESOLVED:

- a. That the governor appraisal report, and the findings of the annual governor appraisal process conducted by the Chair of the Board, be noted.
- b. That the proposed governor development plan for the 2025/26 academic year be approved.

16 Secretary's Report

The Registrar (Academic) and Secretary to the Board introduced a report [16] concerning the annual overview of governor training and expenses for the period 1 August 2024 to 31 July 2025, and an overview of the board's Register of Interests, following its annual update, and prior to its publication on the university's website. Arising from the discussion of this item, and questions from governors, the following points were highlighted:

- i. As part of the discussion of this item, the board considered again the proposed introduction of the Senior Independent Governor (SIG) role, which had been a recommendation of the governance effectiveness review conducted by Halpin during 2024/25.
- ii. Paul Woodgates, the Deputy Secretary of the Board, abstained from any discussion or decision related to the proposed introduction of the SIG role.
- iii. The Chair of the Board provided a summary of the arguments for and against the introduction of the SIG that had been made previously at the board's meeting on 10 July 2025. It was noted that a final decision had been deferred until the current meeting due to a number of governors having given their apologies on 10 July.
- iv. It was noted that a set of proposed Standing Orders related to the SIG, which included a role description, had been included as appendices to the Secretary's Report. It was agreed that the role description made clear the differences between the roles of Deputy Secretary and SIG.
- v. Ultimately, following further discussion, it was agreed that the SIG role would be introduced at DMU. Generally, it was felt that the case for doing so had merit given that the role would allow the Vice-Chancellor, and other governors, some recourse in the event of a dispute with the Chair and Deputy Chair (and committee chairs), and that the practice was becoming more widespread across the higher education sector. It was also felt that the introduction of the role would likely be a recommendation of future governance effectiveness reviews.

vi. It was agreed that the Governance Office would draft a process whereby independent governors could express their interest in serving as the board's SIG. Expressions of interest in the role would be sought at the earliest opportunity thereafter.

RESOLVED:

- a. That the role of SIG would be introduced for the university's Board of Governors.
- b. That the Governance Office would draft a process whereby independent governors could express their interest in serving as the board's SIG. Expressions of interest in the role would be sought at the earliest opportunity thereafter.
- c. That the contents of the Secretary's Report, and the associated appendices in relation to sector developments, governor training, expenses, and the board's Register of Interests, be noted.
- d. That the decisions taken with regards the student governors and their membership of the Nominations Committee and the Conferences Committee, as outlined in the report, be noted.

17 Minutes of the 19 June 2025 meeting of the Finance and Performance Committee

RESOLVED:

That the minutes [17] be noted.

18 Unconfirmed minutes of the 25 June 2025 meeting of the Academic Board

RESOLVED:

That the minutes [18] be noted.

19 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.

20 Date of the next meeting

The Board of Governors' strategic away day would take place at 10:00 on Thursday 16 October 2025 in The Yard, rooms 3.02 and 3.05.

21 Any other business

No items were raised.

Beverley Shears returned to the meeting at this point; Ian Squires left the meeting for the following item

22 Appraisal of the Chair of the Board for 2024/25

The Deputy Chair of the Board introduced a report [22] concerning the appraisal of the Chair of the Board, which had been conducted during summer 2025.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

Meeting duration: 10:00-13:35