

Minutes:	Board of Governors
Time and date:	10:00, Thursday 25 November 2021
Location:	Virtual meeting held via MS Teams
Present:	Ian Squires (Chair), Lisa Capper, Catherine Clarke, Fiona Cownie (to item 039), Rob Hull, Katie Normington, Sara Pierson, Aashni Sawjani, Beverley Shears, Richard Snape, Peter Tansley (to item 042) and Daniel Toner
In attendance:	Professor A Collop, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Ms J Cooke, Executive Director of Student and Academic Services (items 039), Dr P Cross, Chief Finance and Resources Officer, Ms M Fowler, Executive Director of Marketing and Communications (items 037), Ms C Keenan, Governance Officer, Professor H McLaughlin, Pro Vice-Chancellor Academic Staff Development and Dean of Business and Law (item 036), Ms L Robinson, Registrar (Academic) and Clerk to the Board
Secretary:	Nick Jeffs, 0116 257 7516; nick.jeffs@dmu.ac.uk

CONFIRMED

026 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Ms D Buchanan, Mr P Clarke, Mr J Lees, Ms S Manikon-Deane and Mr S Weston.

027 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.

028 Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes [028] of the 7 October 2021 meeting of the Board of Governors were approved subject to the final resolution of item 017 being split into two and amended to read:

- b. That the draft KPTs be noted.
- c. That the 'Model 3' approach to the presentation of the KPTs be endorsed.

This amendment would make it clear that the draft KPTs, as presented in the report, had been noted and that the board expressed a preference for the proposed 'Model 3' approach to the presentation of the targets.

029 Matters arising

022 Governor Appraisal Report 2020/21 by the Chair of the Board of Governors

Owing to a limited number of responses thus far, the Clerk's Office would issue to governors an updated list of training opportunities. This list would be reissued at regular intervals to capture training and development opportunities that would arise throughout the year.

All of the remaining matters arising [029] had been completed prior to the meeting or were scheduled to be considered by the board at a future date.

030 Chair's update

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

- i. Due to colleagues' availability, the agenda for the meeting would be reordered so that the Appraisal of the Chair of the Board be considered at item 033. It was noted that agendas for board meetings would now be divided into 'strategic', 'governance' and 'assurance' items.
- ii. It was intended that the board would consider the Annual Financial Return for 2021/22, including the university's annual accounts, at its meeting on 13 January 2022. It was noted that the annual accounts would normally have been considered at the board's November meeting but had been delayed until early in the new year. These delays had been caused primarily by issues associated with the valuation of the Local Government Pension Scheme, and the external auditors' approach to addressing those issues. It was hoped that a more efficient approach would be taken in future years.
- iii. Following interviews earlier in the week, it was hoped that the university would be appointing five new independent governors. The proposal to appoint these individuals would be considered by the Nominations Committee at a meeting on 29 November and it was intended that the board would be asked to ratify their proposed appointment by email shortly thereafter. The final interviews for governor apprentices (as part of Perrett Laver's Governance Apprenticeship Programme) would take place on 26 November and it was hoped that the appointment of any successful candidates would be considered by the Nominations Committee and the board alongside the aforementioned proposed independent governor appointments.
- iv. Positive initial discussions had taken place with a potential candidate for the role Chancellor for the university. It was hoped that a meeting with that candidate would take place in early December and that a proposal regarding their appointment might be brought before the board at its meeting in January 2022.
- v. Advance HE had begun their review of the effectiveness of governance at DMU. A draft report was expected from Advance HE before the end of the year and it was hoped that it would be considered in full at the board's meeting in January 2022.
- vi. Ms Nikki Pierce would be joining the university in February 2022 as Registrar (Academic)/Secretary to the Board of Governors.
- vii. It was proposed that, in the absence of a volunteer from amongst the independent governors, Professor Shushma Patel join the Trustee Board of De Montfort Students' Union (DSU). However, after some discussion, and on the basis of the appointment being for one year only, Ms Shears volunteered to serve on the Trustee Board instead. Professor Patel and the students' union would be

- informed, and it was suggested that one of the aforementioned new independent governors might take up the role following the end of Ms Shears' tenure.
- viii. The university would be holding an open day on 4 December; governors were invited to attend should they wish to do so.

RESOLVED:

- a. That the updates be noted.
- b. That the Registrar (Academic) and Clerk to the Board would inform Professor Patel and the students' union of the proposal that Ms Shears serve on DSU's Trustee Board for up to one year.

031 Report of the Vice-Chancellor

The Vice-Chancellor (VC) delivered an update concerning a range of recent developments in relation to the university and the higher education sector as a whole. The update expanded upon the contents of an accompanying written report [031]. Key developments included:

- i. On 24 November, the Institute for Fiscal Studies had published a report that ranked English universities on their contributions to social mobility. The rankings had been weighted heavily towards London-based institutions but DMU had placed 31st out of 111, making it the highest placed university in the East Midlands.
- ii. John Blake had been appointed as the new Director for Fair Access and Participation at the Office for Students (OfS). The Department for Education had issued the OfS with new guidance around its expected approach to access and participation under the new director.
- iii. **[Redacted]**
- iv. Appointments to the roles of Pro Vice-Chancellor Research and Pro Vice-Chancellor Business Innovation and Regional Engagement had been made internally. Further details would be announced in due course.
- v. There had been substantial interest among staff in the university's now closed voluntary redundancy/voluntary severance scheme. The expressions of interests submitted by staff would be reviewed in the coming weeks and the outcome of their application would be relayed to them accordingly. It was noted that the university would aim to ensure that no student's studies would be disrupted as a result of staff leaving DMU through the scheme.
- vi. Following a ballot of its members, the DMU branch of the University and College Union had not received sufficient support for industrial action concerning pay and pensions. However, it was noted that industrial action was likely to take place at other institutions.
- vii. **[Redacted]**

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

032 DMU financial position

The Chief Finance and Resources Officer (CFRO) delivered a presentation concerning the university's financial position as at 30 September 2021 (Period 2), which had been reported to the Finance and Performance Committee at its meeting on 4 November. Arising from the discussion of this item, and questions from governors, the following points were highlighted:

- i. UKVI-related risks associated with progression between years of study were being managed by the university and monitored closely by the Audit Committee. It was suggested that DMU was unlikely to be the only institution being presented with such risks and the board were assured that the university was in communication with the UKVI regarding its circumstances.
- ii. It was considered likely that further data around the impact of COVID-19 on the progression of students into their second and third years of study would emerge in the coming weeks.

RESOLVED:

- a. That the presentation be noted.
- b. That the presentation slides be uploaded to the board's SharePoint site.

Mr Squires left the meeting for the consideration of the following item

033 Appraisal of the Chair of the Board

The Deputy Chair of the Board introduced a report [033] concerning the appraisal of the performance of the Chair of the Board to date.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

Mr Squires re-joined the meeting at this point

034 Strategy update including Key Performance Targets

The Vice-Chancellor introduced reports concerning proposed key performance targets (KPTs) in support of the university's new strategic plan [033a] and the implementation plan for the 'Equality for All' cross-cutting strategic theme [033b]. Arising from the discussion of this item, and questions from governors, the following points were highlighted:

- i. KPTs aimed at the eradication of certain gaps reflected the targets that the university had set for itself in its Access and Participation Plan for the years 2020/21 to 2024/25.
- ii. It was suggested that it would be useful to include target dates by which certain KPTs would be achieved, as well as milestone targets to help ensure that the university remained on track in the intervening period. These would be developed following the approval of the KPTs.
- iii. It was suggested that, where possible, it would be useful to include sector comparisons for each of the KPTs.
- iv. The implementation plans for the remaining strategic themes in development and would be shared with the board across its forthcoming meetings.
- v. In terms of the 'Equality for All' implementation plan, it was suggested that the target around increased representation of staff diversity among 'Senior Staff' be broadened to focus on the diversity of all staff, not just senior leaders.

RESOLVED:

- a. That the proposed KPTs, and their associated outcomes and metrics, be approved.

- b. That the 'Equality for All' implementation plan be approved subject to the one amendment noted above at 034v.

035 Education 2030 update

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor delivered a presentation concerning the latest developments in the university's 'Education 2030' programme. Arising from the discussion of this item, and questions from governors, the following points were highlighted:

- i. Acknowledging the enormity of the proposed changes across a number of programmes of study, it was suggested that the university would need to be mindful of the risk and impact of 'change fatigue' across the institution. It was noted that the People and Culture Committee would monitor closely the impact of the programme on staff.
- ii. It would be useful to identify areas that would seize upon the opportunities presented by the programme with enthusiasm, and to then use that enthusiasm to help lead changes in other areas of the institution.
- iii. It was suggested that concerns remained among some academic staff regarding the pedagogical value of block teaching. It was acknowledged that block teaching would need to be implemented correctly in order to ensure its pedagogical effectiveness and that programme teams had received training to help them to do so.
- iv. It was agreed that it would be important to ensure the scheduling of classes and the sharing of resources was done in such a way so as to avoid excessive levels of demand at any one time.

RESOLVED:

- a. That the presentation be noted.
- b. That the presentation slides be uploaded to the board's SharePoint site.

036 Update from the Faculty of Business and Law

The Pro Vice-Chancellor Academic Staff Development and Dean of Business and Law delivered a presentation outlining the impact of, and opportunities arising from, the Faculty of Business and Law's (BAL) engagement with the Education 2030 programme. Arising from the discussion of this item, and questions from governors, the following points were highlighted:

- i. Progress to date in BAL had been positive, with colleagues seizing upon the opportunity to personalise their programmes and to refine the faculty's offer overall.
- ii. It was acknowledged that there might be a perception that student choice would become more limited following the changes but the faculty were confident that the remaining programmes included all of the key elements that business-related degrees should contain. It was noted that there would still exist pathways to allow for a degree of specialisation.
- iii. Reflections from the university's other three faculties would be shared with the board across its future meetings.

RESOLVED:

- a. That the presentation be noted.

- b. That the presentation slides, and the faculty's annual report, be uploaded to the board's SharePoint site.

037 DMU brand campaign

The Executive Director of Marketing and Communications delivered a presentation concerning the university's new advertising campaign, which was entitled 'Made from More'. Arising from the discussion of this item, and questions from governors, the following points were highlighted:

- i. The board welcomed the quality of the new campaign as well as its wide dissemination via social media.
- ii. It was noted that the case studies illustrated in the presentation would be used on social media, direct marketing, and university open days.

RESOLVED:

- a. That the presentation be noted.
- b. That the presentation slides and accompanying videos be uploaded to the board's SharePoint site.

038 Modern Slavery Statement

The CFRO introduced a report concerning the university's Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement for the financial year ending 31 July 2021 [037]. Arising from the discussion of this item, and questions from governors, the following points were highlighted:

- i. The university aimed to ensure that the supply chains of its international partners were compatible with DMU's standards in terms of modern slavery and human trafficking. However, it was acknowledged that such partners were not subject to the Modern Slavery Act 2015 and that it was difficult to ensure that such partnerships were entirely free of risk in this area.
- ii. It was noted that the university monitored risks associated with its contracts with international partners on a regular basis although there was no contractual mechanism that would allow DMU to carry out detailed checks on specific issues that might arise with a supplier.
- iii. It was noted that one element of the statement (the global annual turnover of the university) remained subject to the finalisation of the annual accounts.

RESOLVED:

- a. That the Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement be approved for signature by the Chair of the Board, subject to the finalisation of the figure for the global annual turnover of the university.
- b. That, once signed, the statement would be published on the university's website.

039 Prevent annual report

The Executive Director of Student and Academic Services introduced the annual report regarding the university's compliance with the Prevent duty, as well as the Prevent annual accountability and data return (ADR), which was due to be submitted to the OfS by 1 December [038]. Arising from the discussion of this item, and questions from governors, the following points were highlighted:

- i. The Audit Committee continued to monitor staff compliance with Prevent-related training. It was noted that levels of compliance had improved over the course of the year.
- ii. It was noted that international partners were not bound by the Prevent duty.
- iii. The following amendments to the appendices were suggested: that it would be useful to reference in appendix 1 the training that the university had delivered to apprenticeship partners, and that a reference to the Higher Education Funding Council for England be removed from appendix 4. It was noted that these amendments would not necessitate a delay in the submission of the ADR to the OfS.

RESOLVED:

- a. That the report be noted.
- b. That the ADR be approved for signature by the Chair of the Board and submission to the OfS by the deadline of 1 December.

Professor Cownie left the meeting at this point

040 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

A key area of focus for the Audit Committee focus was the university's annual accounts and the work being undertaken by the external auditor to ensure that they would be produced in time to be shared with the bond holder and the OfS. The committee had also considered PwC's annual internal audit report, which had been positive overall, whilst highlighting some areas for improvement in the future. An area of particular concern to the committee was cyber security and it was suggested that the board may wish to seek some support from an external expert in this area.

ii. Finance and Performance Committee

In addition to the minutes of the most recent meeting, which had been circulated to the board separately, it was noted that the committee had begun receiving monthly updates concerning the university's financial position.

iii. People and Culture Committee

In addition to the minutes of the most recent meeting, which had been included at item 051 on the agenda, it was noted that the committee continued to focus on the work arising from the outcomes of the university's most recent cultural survey.

iv. Ofsted and skills

Recent developments in this area included:

- Areas of ongoing development included the availability of data regarding apprenticeships, and a self-assessment report and quality improvement plan, which would be submitted to Ofsted in January 2022.

- The development of an expanded risk register, which would provide a greater level of granularity beneath the headline risks.
- The submission of DMU's application to join the register of apprenticeship training providers.
- Ms Capper and Mr Hull would be undertaking learning walks aimed at reviewing areas of the university's apprenticeship provision.

v. Academic Board

Academic Board (AB) had focussed recently on the approval of its annual report for 2020/21 and plan for 2021/22, as included at item 041, as well as the approval of an induction process for new members. AB had also held a robust discussion concerning the Education 2030 programme, and had sought assurance around the actions being taken to address issues raised by students via the National Student Survey (NSS).

vi. De Montfort Students' Union

The students' union had constituted a new committee aimed at helping to address some of the issues raised by students via the NSS. It was hoped that this committee would allow for greater collaboration with the university on this important issue. The union had begun to explore how it might be involved in the Education 2030 programme, and would be holding its away day in December where the Trustee Board would meet with the new CEO. It was agreed that the board would meet with the new CEO in due course.

RESOLVED:

That the updates be noted.

041 Academic Board annual report for 2020/21 and annual plan for 2021/22

The Vice-Chancellor introduced the Academic Board annual report for 2020/21 and annual plan for 2021/22.

RESOLVED:

That the annual report for 2020/21 and annual plan for 2021/22 be noted.

042 Register of Interests

The Registrar and Clerk to the Board introduced the most up to date version of the board's Register of Interests. In considering this item, a number of governors noted potential changes or additions to their own entry and it was agreed that these would be confirmed to the Clerk's Office via email so that the register could be updated again before it was published.

RESOLVED:

That the register be approved for publication, subject to any further amendments that governors would confirm to the Clerk's Office.

Mr Tansley left the meeting at this point

043 Committee constitutions

The Registrar and Clerk to the Board introduced the approved constitutions for 2022/23 for the Academic Board [043a], Finance and Performance Committee [043b], and People and Culture Committee [043c]. Prior to the meeting, a handful of issues had been identified with the constitution of the Academic Board and it was noted that these would be addressed ahead of the next meeting of that body.

RESOLVED:

That the constitutions be endorsed.

044 Board of Governors' cycle of business

The Registrar and Clerk to the Board introduced the board's cycle of business for 2022/23, noting that the document was 'live' and therefore would be subject to change throughout the year.

RESOLVED:

That the cycle of business be noted.

045 Items to note

-

056 The various items [045-056] were noted.

057 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.

058 Date of the next meeting

The next meeting of the Board of Governors will take place 10:00 on Thursday 13 January 2022 in Campus Centre room 2.01/2.02.

059 Any other business

No items were raised.

10:00-13:42