

Minutes:	Board of Governors
Time and date:	10:00, Thursday 29 September 2022
Location:	Hugh Aston Building, rooms 5.12 and 5.13
Present:	Ian Squires (Chair), Catherine Clarke, Peter Collyer, Stuart Dawkins, Jon Lees, Jonathan Kerry (from item 10), Jonathan Mills, Katie Normington, Buddy Penfold, Aashni Sawjani, Peter Tansley and Paul Woodgates (from item 10)
In attendance:	David Bryan (Director of the Strategic Planning Service) (item 9), Lis Clarke (Deputy Director of Marketing and Communications) (item 10), Pete Cross (Chief Finance and Resources Officer), Richard Greene (Deputy Vice-Chancellor), Nikki Pierce (Registrar (Academic) and Secretary to the Board), Sam Weston (Corporate Governance Manager)
Secretary:	Nick Jeffs; nick.jeffs@dmu.ac.uk

CONFIRMED

1 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Fiona Cownie, Shreeya Paudel, Sara Pierson, Sardip Sandhu, Bev Shears and Dan Toner. Apologies for late arrival had been received from Jonathan Kerry.

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 Decision taken between meetings

The board noted a decision taken in July 2022, via correspondence, approving the appointment of three new independent governors as well as the membership of the board's committees for the 2022/23 academic year.

4 Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes [4] of the 7 July 2022 meeting of the Board of Governors were approved.

5 Matters arising

148a Instrument and Articles of Government, and Standing Orders

It was hoped that a second student governor would be appointed to the board at its away day meeting on 13 October with a view to them attending their first board meeting on 24 November 2022.

All of the remaining matters arising [5] had been completed prior to the meeting or were scheduled to be considered by the board at a future date.

6 Report from the Chair

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

- i. The Chair thanked those governors who had joined DMU's graduation ceremonies over the summer, one of which had also included the investiture of the university's Chancellor, Akram Khan MBE. The Chair encouraged as many governors as possible to volunteer to attend future graduation ceremonies. It was noted that the next series of ceremonies would take place in February 2023 and that the Governance Office would circulate to governors a schedule of dates for which they could volunteer.
- ii. Whilst visiting campus during August, the Chair had been pleased to note the sense of positivity and buoyancy around the university's Clearing operations.
- iii. The Chair reminded governors that, following the meeting, they had all been invited to join the student union's 'Well Fest' student fair, which would be taking place in the Campus Centre. This would be an opportunity for governors to see one of the events held for new students, which would include the presence of various charities and organisations who would be on hand to provide support and advice to freshers.

RESOLVED:

- a. That the report be noted.
- b. That the Governance Office would circulate to governors a schedule of graduation ceremony dates for which they would be encouraged to volunteer.

7 Report from the Vice-Chancellor

The Vice-Chancellor introduced a report (7) 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's modest rise in *The Times* and *The Sunday Times* league table appeared to be largely as a result of improvements to DMU's staff:student ratio as well as elements of its National Student Survey (NSS) results. It was noted that, *The Guardian* league table, in which DMU had dropped two places, did not include research-related metrics in its methodology.
- ii. **[Redacted]**
- iii. Governors were assured that the recent social unrest in Leicester had not spread far enough through the city to reach DMU and there had been no evidence of the university's students or staff being involved in any way. However, DMU (and the University of Leicester) had been part of a multi-agency response group, and had

taken the precaution of increasing security patrols on campus. Both institutions had also been commissioned by the City Mayor to undertake research into the issues that had led to the unrest.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

8 [Redacted]

9 National Student Survey results 2022

The Director of the Strategic Planning Service introduced a report [9] concerning the university's performance in the 2022 NSS. Arising from the discussion of this item, and questions from governors, the following points were highlighted:

- i. It was recognised that improving the NSS outcomes would not be a 'quick fix'; although the university had improved since the 2021 survey, it was still some way off benchmark in certain areas.
- ii. It was further recognised that the action plan-based approach taken in previous years had not led to the improvements that the university was seeking to make. Instead, it was felt that a more strategic, data-led approach would allow the executive to focus on areas where particular issues had been identified by the results of the survey.
- iii. It was agreed that, with such a data-led approach, it would be critical to ensure that said data was available, of suitably high quality, and that it was useful (i.e. measuring the right elements of the student experience). It was suggested that separating the data into 'themes' might be a useful way of making it more approachable and encouraging staff to engage with the collection process.
- iv. It was noted that consideration was being given as to the role the Finance and Performance Committee might play in exploring and challenging performance metrics.
- v. It was suggested that the internal student satisfaction data, which would be captured during November, be shared with the board at a future meeting.

RESOLVED:

- a. That the report be noted.
- b. That internal student satisfaction data be shared with the board at a future meeting.

10 Recruitment and admissions update

The Deputy Director of Marketing and Communications introduced a report [10] that outlined the university's current position in terms of student recruitment for the 2022/23 academic year. Arising from the discussion of this item, and questions from governors, the following points were highlighted:

- i. Domestic undergraduate recruitment had seen a slight increase in applications from the East Midlands, and the university was hoping to increase its market share of applicants from the West Midlands and London. However, it was acknowledged that the university would need to wait for sector-wide recruitment data to be released by the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service before it would be able to measure its performance against that of its competitors.

- ii. Overseas applications continued to come primarily from China, India and Nigeria, although the university had started to see growth in the number of applications coming from other international markets. It was noted that overseas applicants tended to favour programmes of study in the Faculty of Business and Law, as well as programmes in computer science and engineering.
- iii. It was suggested that the upturn in the university's recruitment position evidenced the positive impact of its new brand campaign, 'Made from More', which, according to applicant surveys, had resonated strongly. Education 2030, and the move to block teaching in some areas, had also been a key elements of the university's marketing strategy.
- iv. It was noted that the university had managed to maintain a higher level of tariff than in the previous cycle, although it was acknowledged that this was still lower than some of its competitors.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

11 **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

Items of note included:

- The committee would be joined at its next meeting by two new members, new governors Jonathan Kerry and Lauren Waters.
- The Chair of the committee had met with the external auditors and was content that the audit work appeared to be proceeding according to schedule, with the annual accounts on track to be considered by the board at its meeting on 15 January.

ii. Finance and Performance Committee

The committee's meeting on 13 July had been focussed on consideration of the balance of the university's investments with JP Morgan, following a 5% decrease in the value of the invested assets due to market volatility. Having considered its options, the committee recommended that the university continue with its current approach (a 60/40 portfolio of equities and fixed income bonds), recognising that the strategy was intended to be long-term and that, during the period of investment, some market volatility would be expected.

iii. People and Culture Committee

In the absence of the Chair of the People and Culture Committee, no update was provided.

iv. Ofsted and skills

In the absence of a lead governor for Ofsted and skills, no update was provided.

v. Academic Board

The Academic Board had not met since the board's previous meeting therefore there was no update to provide.

vi. De Montfort Students' Union

Items of note included:

- Students' engagement with Fresher's Fair had been positive thus far.
- The students' union was hoping to evolve the existing approach to course representatives by having them work more closely with module leaders.
- The union continued work with the university on a range of issues, including its submission to the Teaching Excellence Framework, and a Student Futures Manifesto.

RESOLVED:

That the updates be noted.

12 Governor appraisals 2021/22

The Registrar (Academic) and Secretary to the Board introduced a report [12] concerning the outcome of the appraisal of governors' performance during the 2021/22 academic year. It was agreed that several of the key points raised by governors during their appraisal would be considered as part of a wider discussion on governance at DMU that was scheduled to take place at the board's strategic away day meeting on 13 October.

RESOLVED:

- a. That the report be noted.
- b. That the proposed governor training and development plan for 2022/23, as appended to the report, be approved.
- c. That governors indicate to the Governance Office any training or development opportunities of which they would like to take advantage.

13 Governor expenses and training 2021/22

The Registrar (Academic) and Secretary to the Board introduced a report [13] concerning an overview of governor training and expenses for the period 1 August 2021 to 31 July 2022.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

14 Register of Interests

The Registrar (Academic) and Secretary to the Board introduced the Board of Governors' Register of Interests (as at 20 September 2022) [14].

RESOLVED:

- a. That the Register of Interests be noted.

- b. That the register be published on the university's website by the Governance Office.

15 Results of the annual effectiveness self-assessment

The Registrar (Academic) and Secretary to the Board introduced the results [15] of the board's first annual effectiveness self-assessment survey, which had been conducted following the meeting on 7 July 2022. Arising from the discussion of this item, and questions from governors, the following points were highlighted:

- i. Governors welcomed the introduction of the survey, noting that it would be a useful companion-piece to the annual appraisal process. It was also noted that the survey would add a further opportunity for reflection in addition to that currently taken at the end of each meeting.
- ii. The responses to the survey had indicated the need to reflect on some areas of the current approach to inducting and developing governors. Ways in which the current approach might be enhanced would be considered ahead of the next round of governor recruitment.
- iii. The responses to the survey had also indicated a keenness amongst governors to feel closer to the student and staff voices, as well as the Academic Board and academic governance more generally. It was agreed that ways in which governors might become usefully closer to these areas be explored at the board's forthcoming strategic away. It was suggested that that the Academic Board might consider how it could work to bolster its relationship with governors.
- iv. It was also agreed that thought be given at the away day as to how awareness of the board, and governance more widely, might be raised at DMU.
- v. The Chair suggested that there was a degree of disconnect between some of the survey responses and the overall tenor of conversations that he had held with governors as part of the appraisal process. It was agreed that it would also be useful to explore these areas in greater detail at the away day.
- vi. It was suggested that, in future, it might be useful to conduct the survey before the appraisals took place, thus enabling the chair to explore the responses to the survey during those conversations.
- vii. It was also suggested that it would be useful to expand the use of an annual effectiveness survey to the board's committees.
- viii. It was noted that governors would shortly be asked to consider the proposed introduction of a DMU 'governor apprentice' scheme, a key aim of which would be to strengthen the diversity of the board (this being another area of concern that had been identified in the survey responses). A proposal to this end would be submitted to the board at a future meeting.

RESOLVED:

- a. That a number of governor-and governance-related issues be considered at the board's forthcoming strategic away day on 13 October 2022, including:
 - How the board might feel closer to the student and staff voices, as well as the Academic Board and academic governance more generally;
 - How awareness of the board and governance might be raised at DMU.
 - Exploration of the disconnect between some elements of the survey responses and conversations held during governor appraisals.
- b. That, in future, the effectiveness survey would take place before governor appraisals.

- c. That the effectiveness survey be expanded to the board's committees.
- d. That, at a future meeting, the board would consider the proposed introduction of a DMU 'governor apprentice' scheme.

16 Cycle of business for 2022/23

The Registrar (Academic) and Secretary to the Board introduced the board's cycle of business for the 2022/23 [16].

RESOLVED:

That the cycle of business be noted. It was recognised that the cycle was a 'live' document and would, therefore, be subject to change throughout the academic year.

17 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.

18 Date of the next meeting

The Board of Governors' strategic away day would take place at 10:00 on 13 October 2022 in rooms 3.02, 3.05, and 3.06 of The Yard on DMU's campus.

19 Any other business

Executive Director of People and Organisational Development

It was noted that the Executive Director of People and Organisational Development, Janine Brennan, would be leaving the university at the end of September 2022. The Chief Transformation Officer would ensure that suitable cover arrangements were in place until such a time as a permanent successor could be appointed. The board thanked Janine for her contribution to the university and wished her well in her future endeavours.

20 Appraisal of the Chair of Board

The Chair of the Audit Committee (in the absence of the Deputy Chair of the Board) introduced a report [20] concerning the appraisal of the Chair of the Board of Governors, which had been carried out over the summer and led by the Deputy Chair of the Board.

It was noted that the Deputy Chair has received relatively little in the way of feedback with only a handful of response from both governors and members of the executive. It was suggested that, in future, the Governance Office might assist in the process by issuing reminders of the need to contribute to the appraisal of the Chair.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

Meeting duration: 10:00-12:49