

Minutes:	Board of Governors
Time and date:	10:00, Thursday 30 November 2023
Location:	The Yard, room 3.05 and 3.06
Present:	Ian Squires (Chair), Peter Collyer, Alison Court, Stuart Dawkins (until item 50), Phil Grierson, Amir Iqbal, Priya Karasala, Jonathan Mills (from item 44), Patrick Moody, Abdul Mullick, Katie Normington, Buddy Penfold, Sardip Sandhu, Beverley Shears, and Shikha Singh.
In attendance:	Ahmad Alhusan (Executive Director of Strategic Planning Services) (items 47 and 48), Simon Bradbury (Pro Vice-Chancellor International) (item 46), Bridget Donoghue (Executive Director of People Services) (item 50), Mel Fowler (Executive Director of Marketing and Communications) (item 44), Richard Greene (Deputy Vice-Chancellor), Annette Hay (Head of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion) (items 51 and 52), Tracey Jessup (Chief Transformation Officer) (item 49), Chloe Keenan (Governance Officer), Debbie Muddimer (Executive Director of Finance and Procurement), Susan Orr (Pro Vice-Chancellor Education) (items 51 and 52), Nikki Pierce (Registrar (Academic) and Secretary to the Board), Harpreet Sandhu (Head of Legal Services) (item 46)
Secretary:	Nick Jeffs; nick.jeffs@dmu.ac.uk

CONFIRMED

37 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Vivek Ganotra, Jonathan Kerry, Peter Tansley, Dan Toner and Paul Woodgates. Apologies for a late arrival had been received from Jonathan Mills. Apologies for an early departure had been received from Stuart Dawkins.

38 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.

39a Minutes of the 28 September 2023 meeting

RESOLVED:

That the minutes [39a] of the 28 September 2023 meeting of the Board of Governors be approved.

39b Minutes of the 19 October 2023 strategic away day

RESOLVED:

That the minutes [39b] of the 19 October 2023 strategic away day be approved.

40 Matters arising

It was suggested that, due to the current status of the DMU London project, the proposal that one of the 2023/24 board meetings be held at the London campus be revisited at a more appropriate point in time and that, for now, it be removed from the list of outstanding actions.

All of the remaining matters arising [40] had either been completed already or were scheduled for consideration at a future meeting of the board.

41 Report from the Chair

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

- i. Former governor Fiona Cownie, and current governor Jonathan Mills, were leading a 'lessons learnt' review of the DMU Dubai project. It was hoped that the findings of the review would be shared with the Audit and Risk Committee and the Board of Governors at meetings on 5 February 2024 and 29 February 2024, respectively.
- ii. Governors were reminded of the planned session with members of the Academic Board following the meeting, which would focus on the subject of academic governance.
- iii. Governors were also reminded of a planned visit to the university's Riverside Café, which would be holding a number of events to celebrate the launch of a new menu themed around Indian street food.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

42 Report from the Vice-Chancellor

The Vice-Chancellor introduced a report [42] 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 Leadership Board (ULB) would be meeting to discuss medium-term financial planning, including the impact on DMU of the continued freeze in domestic tuition fees, and any potential future decline in the number of overseas students choosing to study in the UK. It was agreed that the outcomes of ULB's discussions would be shared with the board at a future meeting.
- ii. It was felt that the revisions to the DMU London business case would benefit from some further work and it was intended, therefore, that it be brought before the board at the meeting scheduled for 29 February 2024.
- iii. UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) would be visiting DMU for a number of days during the week of 5 December 2023 to carry out an inspection of the university's processes and policies related to immigration compliance, as well as checking

relevant student records. It was agreed that governors would be provided with a further update following the completion of the visit.

- iv. The university would have a presence at COP28 in the 'Blue Zone', which would also host the formal negotiations across the two weeks of the conference, as well as the World Climate Action Summit.
- v. The next 'VC Live' event would take place on 4 December 2023, and would focus primarily on student recruitment, COP28, and university finances. It was agreed that the recording of the event would be made available to governors in due course.

RESOLVED:

- a. That the report be noted.
- b. That the outcomes of ULB's discussions around medium-term financial planning would be shared with the board at a future meeting.
- c. That governors would be provided with an update regarding the UKVI visit following its completion.
- d. That a recording of the 'VC Live' event scheduled for 4 December 2023 would be made available to governors in due course.

43 Report from the Student Governors

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

- i. It was felt that Welcome Week (formerly known as Fresher's Week) had seen an increase in engagement from new students, as well as an increase in footfall through the Campus Centre building. It was felt that the latter had been the result of holding Fresher's Fair and related activities in the Campus Centre rather than at The Venue.
- ii. The first term had also been very busy in terms of union governance with the appointment of a new Student Council and Scrutiny Panel.
- iii. A number of events had taken place to celebrate Black History Month and Disability History month (the latter of which was ongoing).
- iv. The union was looking ahead to welcome events for new students starting in January 2024, as well as the various elections that would take place across the first few months of the year.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

Jonathan Mills joined the meeting at this point

44 Recruitment and admissions update

The Executive Director of Marketing and Communications introduced a report [44] concerning the university's performance in terms of student recruitment and admissions. Arising from the discussion of this item, and questions from governors, the following points were highlighted:

- i. The university's open days had been positive to date, with over 400 more prospective students having visited DMU than at the same point in the previous recruitment cycle.

- ii. It was noted that the university's 'TopView' Clearing advert on TikTok had reached over 4m viewers and was the first post viewed by DMU's target demographic on the day that A-level results were released (17 August 2023). It was agreed that governors would be provided with some further analysis of the extent to which views of the advert were converted into visits to the university's website and/or applications for study.
- iii. It was acknowledged that the government's current position on international students would likely present additional challenges in terms of overseas recruitment, particularly in light of generous visa opportunities being offered by countries such as Australia and Canada. It was noted the Universities UK continued to lobby the government on this matter.
- iv. **[Redacted]**
- v. **[Redacted]**
- vi. It was recognised that Clearing would continue to be competitive but that this was an area of particular strength for DMU. The university would be seeking to maintain its competitive edge in the current year, as well as working towards robust targets in terms of offers and conversion rates. It was noted that those targets would be the subject of rigorous review in the coming months, and would be considered as part of the aforementioned work being undertaken by ULB on the university's medium-term financial planning.

RESOLVED:

- a. That the report be noted.
- b. That governors would be provided with some further analysis of the extent to which views of the university's TikTok 'TopView' Clearing advert were converted into visits to the university's website and/or applications for study.

45 Revised 2023/24 budget, incorporating Quarter 1 update

The Executive Director of Finance and Procurement introduced a report [45] concerning proposed revisions to the 2023/24 budget, and the forecast financial position as at the first quarter of the academic year. Arising from the discussion of this item, and questions from governors, the following points were highlighted:

- i. It was noted that the proposed revised budget had been considered, and approved, by the Finance and Performance Committee at its meeting on 22 November 2023.
- ii. DMU would continue to reflect on how it might further improve its forecasting processes, and had already taken steps to adopt a more 'bottom-up' approach, with greater accountability for target-setting. The university was also developing a resource allocation model, which would help to link more directly faculty performance to budgets, and give a clearer picture of the actual costs of faculty operations.
- iii. It was noted that, even with the proposed reduction in investment funding, the total amount available still represented a year-on-year increase. Governors were assured that no current investment projects had been paused, and that new requests would continue to be assessed via the appropriate channels.

RESOLVED:

- a. That the current student registration position, as set out within the report, and its impact on the 2023/24 income budget, be noted.

- b. That the proposed, revised break-even budget for 2023/24, as set out in the report, be approved.
- c. That the Quarter 1 forecast position, as set out in the report, be noted.

46 [Redacted]

47 Strategic Performance Report

The Executive Director of Strategic Planning Services introduced a report [47] concerning the university's performance to date against the targets set within the Empowering University strategy.

In discussing the report, it was noted that the positive increase in the metric for the outcome 'We demonstrate teaching excellence, supporting staff to provide an exceptional student experience' represented a genuine improvement on the baseline, despite the change in methodology engendered by alterations to the format of the National Student Survey.

RESOLVED:

- a. That the report be noted.
- b. That the recommended adjustments to the measurement of a number of KPTs, following changes to a number of sector metrics, be endorsed.
- c. That the university's expectation of further refinements to KPT metrics, targets or definitions being required in due course, be noted.

48 League tables: domestic and international

The Executive Director of Strategic Planning Services introduced a report [48] concerning the university's performance in the most recent domestic and international league tables. Arising from the discussion of this item, and questions from governors, the following points were highlighted:

- i. It was noted that the university's strategy in this area was to focus on making sustained and sustainable improvements to the overall student experience, which, it was hoped, would lead in turn to improvements in the metrics that informed league tables and, therefore, DMU's positions overall.
- ii. It was recognised that league tables were unlikely to be a key driver of choice of institution for a majority of applicants, and that DMU preferred to articulate its offer in more meaningful ways, such as via open days, without the need to refer to its position in those tables.
- iii. It was noted that any improvements to student satisfaction as a result of block teaching would not filter through to league table metrics until the 2025/26 academic year.
- iv. It was recognised that there existed a tension between some metrics such as those around low tariff entrants and measures of widening participation.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

49 Strategy implementation plan: Digital Transformation

The Chief Transformation Officer introduced a report [50] concerning the progress made by the university in meeting the targets associated with the 'success indicators' of the 'Digital Transformation' implementation plan, and outlining a number of new priority areas of work. Arising from the discussion of this item, and questions from governors, the following points were highlighted:

- i. It was felt that the initial success of the 'MORE Digital Champions' initiative – with over 200 staff already signed up ahead of the formal launch on 5 December 2023 – demonstrated a positive step forward in colleagues' engagement with digital transformation in the workplace.
- ii. It was agreed that it would be important to ensure that business and systems changes were effected at the right level within the institution so as to have the most meaningful impact.
- iii. It was recognised that effective digital transformation would also be a key driver of the university's widening participation work, alongside the broader business and systems changes.
- iv. It was recognised that the scale of the proposed improvements were significant, and would be felt most keenly within the Information Technology and Media Services team, but that there was a significant amount of positivity amongst staff around the need for change and a desire to realise the potential benefits of the transformation programme.

RESOLVED:

- a. That the note the progress outlined in the report be noted.
- b. That the new priority areas of work and associated activities, as set out in the report, be endorsed.

50 Strategy implementation plan: Empowering People

The Executive Director of People Services introduced a report [50] concerning proposed amendments to the 'Empowering People' statement and implementation plan, and the progress made by the university in meeting the targets associated with the 'success indicators' of that plan. Arising from the discussion of this item, and questions from governors, the following points were highlighted:

- i. It was noted that the first 'campus collective' would be focussed on the theme of sustainability, and tie in with the university's work with the UN and COP28.
- ii. It was recognised that improvements in DMU's pay and awarding gaps would take time, and governors welcomed the steps that the university had taken to date to help effect these changes, including the development of an action plan via an internal task force. It was noted that the pay and awarding gaps were being monitored as a matter of routine by the People and Culture Committee.

RESOLVED:

- a. That the proposed amendments to the original 'Empowering People' statement and implementation plan, as set out in the report, be approved.
- b. That the progress made against the identified success indicators of the Empowering People implementation plan, and associated activities, be noted.

Stuart Dawkins left the meeting at this point

51 Strategy implementation plan: Learning for Life

The PVC (Education) and Head of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, introduced a report [51] concerning the progress made by the university in meeting the targets associated with the 'success indicators' of the 'Learning for Life' implementation plan. Arising from the discussion of this item, and questions from governors, the following points were highlighted:

- i. It was noted that current average level of staff engagement with peer observation of teaching was below target, although it was recognised that performance in this area was much better in some faculties than others. In response, the university had ensured that peer observation of teaching was standing item at its learning and teaching committee, and that a greater degree of accountability for performance in this area would lie with faculties in future.
- ii. In considering the report, and the previous two reports, it was suggested that some thought be given as to the best way to present implementation plan updates to the board in future. It was noted that these updates were already considered in detail by committees and that reporting to be board could, therefore, be refocussed in such a way as to provide an effective overview of the progress being made alongside commentary on the impact of the plans and the success of the strategy more broadly. However, it was agreed that it would still be useful for governors to have access to the data (e.g. via SharePoint), even if it was no longer included as part of the formal reporting to the board.

RESOLVED:

- a. That the report be noted.
- b. That the university consider how best to refocus its reporting of implementation plan updates to the full Board of Governors (recognising that the plans are already considered in detail by committees).

52 Annual Equality, Diversity and Inclusion report

The PVC (Education) and Head of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, introduced the university's Annual Equality, Diversity and Inclusion report, which covered the period October 2022 to October 2023. Arising from the discussion of this item, and questions from governors, the following points were highlighted:

- i. It was noted that the annual report had been considered by the People and Culture Committee at its meeting on 25 October 2023.
- ii. The board welcomed the assurance provided by the report that DMU was compliant with relevant equalities legislation and the Public Sector Equality Duty.
- iii. The board commended the university's race pay gap disclosure rate of 95.3%. It was acknowledged that the small year-on-year increase of 0.6% in the university's race pay gap was disappointing, but it was hoped that this would be addressed and reversed by the time of the next census point.
- iv. It was noted that forthcoming revisions to DMU's Access and Participation Plan would be aimed at helping to address some of the challenges highlighted by Advance HE in the university's Race Equality Charter submission, including higher levels of non-continuation amongst certain groups, and sustained awarding gaps.

RESOLVED:

- a. That the annual report be noted.
- b. That the summary of staff and student key data, as appended to the report, would be published on the university's website following the meeting.

53 Prevent Duty annual report

The Registrar (Academic) and Secretary to the Board introduced the annual Prevent report [53], which included the annual Prevent Accountability and Data Return (ADR). Arising from the discussion of this item, and questions from governors, the following points were highlighted:

- i. It was noted that the university was revising its policy on freedom of speech following the passing of the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023. The revised policy would be considered by the board in the spring of 2024.
- ii. It was suggested that a recent, independent review of Prevent, which had made some specific recommendations in relation to universities. It was anticipated that the implications of these recommendations would become clear in due course, once the government published its formal response to the review.
- iii. It was noted that the university had been providing support to those members of its community affected by the ongoing conflict in Israel and Gaza.
- iv. It was noted that a briefing would be arranged during the 2023/24 academic year with the aim of outlining for governors (particularly new governors) the university's responsibilities in relation to the Prevent Duty. It was also suggested that consideration might be given to arranging specific Prevent Duty-related training for governors, if it was felt to be appropriate following the briefing.

RESOLVED:

- a. That the requirements of the Office for Students in respect of the monitoring of the Prevent Duty, and the activity undertaken by the university during 2022/23 (as outlined in the report), be noted.
- b. That the ADR be approved for submission to the Office for Students by the deadline of 1 December 2023. The Chair of the Board of Governors would sign the ADR declaration following the conclusion of the meeting.
- c. That a briefing would be arranged during the 2023/24 academic year with the aim of outlining for governors the university's responsibilities in relation to the Prevent Duty.

54 Ofsted Self-assessment Report and Quality Improvement Plan

The Registrar (Academic) and Secretary to the Board introduced a report [54] concerning the university's Self-Assessment Report (SAR) and Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) for apprenticeships provision and the Art and Design Foundation Diploma (all of which fell under the remit of Ofsted or the purposes of quality assurance).

In discussing the report, it was noted that DMU continued to work to address the availability and quality of the data that informed the SAR and QIP, and that both documents would be updated in due course to reflect the outcomes of the university's Annual Enhancement Monitoring process.

RESOLVED:

That the SAR and QIP, as appended to the report, be noted.

55 Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement

The Executive Director of Finance and Procurement introduced a report [55] concerning the university's Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking statement for the 2022/23 academic year.

RESOLVED:

That the statement be approved. It was noted that the statement would be signed by the Chair of the Board of Governors following the meeting.

56 Academic Board annual report for 2022/23 and plan for 2023/24

The Vice-Chancellor introduced a report [56] concerning the Academic Board's annual report for the 2022/23 academic year, and its plan for 2023/24. Arising from the discussion of this item, and questions from governors, the following points were highlighted:

- i. It was noted that there were a number of areas of overlap in terms of the reporting that was considered by both the Board of Governors and the Academic Board, including around the university's strategy.
- ii. Those governors who also sat on Academic Board felt that meetings were well-attended and that participation by members was very positive.
- iii. It was suggested that, in addition to receiving the minutes of each meeting, a summary of business considered by Academic Board would be shared with governors following each meeting. This summary would be published on the university's intranet and governors would be provided with a link to the relevant area.

RESOLVED:

- a. That the annual report for 2022/23 and plan for 2023/24 be noted.
- b. That a link to the summaries of Academic Board meetings would be shared with governors in due course.

57 Member's updates

i. Audit and Risk Committee

In the absence of the Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee, no update was provided. However, it was noted that the minutes of the 11 October 2023 extraordinary meeting of the Audit and Risk Committee were included at item 62.

ii. Finance and Performance Committee

In the absence of the Chair of the Finance and Performance Committee, no update was provided. However, it was noted that the unconfirmed minutes of the 2 November 2023 meeting of the Finance and Performance Committee were included at item 65.

iii. People and Culture Committee

The unconfirmed minutes of the 25 October 2023 meeting of the People and Culture Committee were included at item 66. In addition, the Chair of the committee highlighted the following:

- The committee had considered a number of key reports, including: updates to the 'Empowering People' and 'Digital Transformation' implementation plans, the Annual Equality, Diversity and Inclusion report, and annual reports focussing on Health and Safety, and Health and Wellbeing.
- The committee had begun to hold useful, informed discussions about not only the content of university policies, but also the tone in which they were written.

iv. Lead governors for Ofsted and skills

There were no further updates in this area beyond those already covered at item 54, the 'Ofsted Self-assessment Report and Quality Improvement Plan'.

v. Academic Board

There were no further updates in this area beyond those already covered at item 56, the 'Academic Board annual report for 2022/23 and plan for 2023/24'.

In addition, the Chair of the Remuneration Committee provided a brief update concerning items of business considered at its meeting on 13 November 2023. It was noted that a further meeting of the committee would be held in the spring to consider Universities and Colleges Employers Association benchmarking data.

RESOLVED:

That the updates be noted.

58 Approval of a University Companionship Award

The Vice-Chancellor introduced a report [58] proposing the conferral of a University Companionship Award on Denis Oswald. The conferral of the award had been recommended by the Conferments Committee at its meeting on 9 November 2023.

RESOLVED:

That the conferral of a University Companionship Award on Denis Oswald be approved.

59 Committee constitutions

The Registrar (Academic) and Secretary introduced the constitutions [59] of the Academic Board, the Nominations Committee, and the Remuneration Committee, for the 2023/24 academic year.

RESOLVED:

That the constitutions of the Academic Board, the Nominations Committee, and the Remuneration Committee, for the 2023/24 academic year, be endorsed.

60 Committee annual reports

The Registrar (Academic) and Secretary introduced the annual reports [60] of the Audit Committee, the Finance and Performance Committee, the People and Culture Committee, and the Remuneration Committee, for the 2022/23 academic year.

RESOLVED:

That the annual reports of the Audit Committee, the Finance and Performance Committee, the People and Culture Committee, and the Remuneration Committee, for the 2022/23 academic year, be noted.

61 Results of committee effectiveness self-assessment surveys

The Registrar (Academic) and Secretary introduced the results [61] of the annual effectiveness self-assessment surveys that had been carried out at the end of the 2023/24 academic year by the Audit Committee, the Finance and Performance Committee, and People and Culture Committee.

It was suggested that, for future iterations of the survey, some thought should be given as to how it might be adapted to account for the following:

- i. a smaller group of respondents (the current version being based on the survey taken by the full board);
- ii. the participation of meeting attendees as well as committee members (whilst still maintaining clarity of the views of independent governors);
- iii. the views of the Chairs of the respective committees; and
- iv. opportunities for more emotional/narrative answers, and the use of a more appropriate scale.

RESOLVED:

That the survey results be noted.

62 Minutes of the 11 October 2023 extraordinary meeting of the Audit and Risk Committee

RESOLVED:

That the minutes [62] be noted.

63 2023/23 Internal Audit Plan

RESOLVED:

That the plan [63] be noted.

64 Information Governance annual report

RESOLVED:

That the report [64] be noted.

65 Unconfirmed minutes of the 2 November 2023 meeting of the Finance and Performance Committee

RESOLVED:

That the minutes [65] be noted.

66 Unconfirmed minutes of the 25 October 2023 meeting of the People and Culture Committee

RESOLVED:

That the minutes [66] be noted.

67 Annual Health and Safety Report 2022/23

RESOLVED:

That the report [67] be noted.

68 Annual Health and Wellbeing Report 2022/23

RESOLVED:

That the report [68] be noted.

69 Minutes of the 18 June 2023 meeting of the Academic Board

RESOLVED:

That the minutes [69] be noted.

70 Unconfirmed minutes of the 11 October 2023 meeting of the Academic Board

RESOLVED:

That the minutes [70] be noted.

71 Items placed under the university seal

RESOLVED:

That the report [71] be noted.

72 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.

73 Date of the next meeting

The next meeting of the Board of Governors would take place at 10:00 on Thursday 29 February 2024 in the Clephan Building, room 2.29.

74 Any other business

No items were raised.

Meeting duration: 10:00-14:01