

Minutes:	Board of Governors' Strategic Away Day
Time and date:	10:00, Thursday 7 October 2021
Location:	Campus Centre room 2/01/2.02
Present:	Ian Squires (Chair), Catherine Clarke, Phil Clarke, Rob Hull (until item 019), Jon Lees, Katie Normington, Aashni Sawjani, Beverley Shears, Richard Snape, Peter Tansley (except for item 020) and Daniel Toner (until item 021)
In attendance:	Mr S Bradbury, Pro Vice-Chancellor International and Dean of Arts, Design and Humanities (items 015-019 and 021), Ms J Brennan, Executive Director of People and Organisational Development (items 015-021), Ms E Clarke, Deputy Director of Marketing and Communications (item 015), Professor A Collop, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Ms J Cooke, Executive Director of Student and Academic Services (items 015-021), Dr P Cross, Chief Finance Officer, Ms M Fowler, Executive Director of Marketing and Communications (items 015-021), Mr R Kitt, Head of Market Insight and Planning (item 015), Professor H McLaughlin, Pro Vice-Chancellor Academic Staff Development and Dean of Business and Law (items 015-021), Dr S Oldroyd, Pro Vice-Chancellor Sustainability and Dean of Health and Life Sciences (items 015-021), Ms C Marchant, Chief Executive, UCAS, (item 015), Ms H Mercado, Head of Admissions (item 105), Ms K Patel, Deputy Pro Vice-Chancellor Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (items 015-021), Professor S Patel, Pro Vice-Chancellor Student Experience and Dean of Computing, Engineering and Media (items 015-021), Ms L Robinson, Interim Registrar (Academic) and Clerk to the Board, Ms J Warne, Customer Success Director, UCAS (item 015), Mr S Weston, Corporate Governance Manager
Secretary:	Nick Jeffs, 0116 257 7516; nick.jeffs@dmu.ac.uk

CONFIRMED

009 Welcome and introductions

The Chair welcomed governors, and those DMU officers present, to the Board of Governors' Strategic Away Day.

010 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Ms D Buchanan, Ms L Capper, Professor F Cownie, Ms S Manikon-Deane and Ms S Pierson.

011 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.

012 Decision taken between meetings

A resolution of the board concerning the university opening and operating bank accounts in Dubai, which was made by email in August 2021, was noted.

013 Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes [013] of the 8 July 2021 meeting of the Board of Governors were approved subject to the first sentence of item 165 being amended to read:

‘Governors were advised that the university’s autumn graduation ceremonies would take place from 16-20 November 2021 at the Curve Theatre in Leicester.’

014 Matters arising

120b Ofsted preparedness

The secretary would circulate to governors following the meeting the guidance document concerning Ofsted inspections.

All of the remaining matters arising [014] had been completed prior to the meeting or were scheduled to be considered by the board at a future date.

Members of the University Leadership Board joined the meeting at this point.

015 A presentation by Clare Marchant, Chief Executive of UCAS, followed by a Q&A session

The Chief Executive of UCAS, and Customer Success Director, UCAS, delivered a presentation concerning the 2021 admissions cycle as well as a look ahead to the 2022 cycle. Arising from the discussion of this item, and questions from governors, the following points were highlighted:

- i. Data from UCAS suggested that there was some variety by programme in the likelihood of an applicant accepting a place to study at DMU (for example, computing and creative arts programmes).
- ii. It was acknowledged that there was more work to be done across the sector to help applicants identify their ‘best fit’ university i.e. that an applicants’ decision about where to study might be based on how well an institution would meet their needs overall rather than just academic entry requirements.
- iii. It was recognised that issues relating to the impact of COVID-19, in particular grade inflation and lost learning, would mean that some new students were likely to require significant levels of support with their university studies.

- iv. It was recognised that it would be important for the sector, including DMU, to continue to capitalise on the opportunities offered by the provision of apprenticeships.
- v. Based on UCAS data, it was suggested that the most successful marketing was targeted, with applicants looking for a more personalised approach than traditional techniques such as billboards. Digital marketing was becoming increasingly important, particularly via popular social media channels such as Instagram and TikTok.
- vi. It was suggested that there was still a healthy appetite overseas for UK higher education. However, it would be beneficial for the sector to present a united front in terms of international recruitment in order to reduce the risks posed by popular institutions in countries such as Australia and Canada.

RESOLVED:

- a. That the presentation be noted.
- b. That the presentation be uploaded to the board's SharePoint site following the meeting.
- c. That the Chief Executive of UCAS would be invited to a future Strategic Away Day to provide an updated picture of admissions across the sector.

016 Vice-Chancellor's update

Ahead of the Vice-Chancellor's update, the Chair of the Board delivered the following updates:

- i. The Chair welcomed the progress that the board had made over the past year in addressing the issues that had arisen as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. It was noted that the coming years would likely continue to be difficult in some respects but that the board was well positioned to rise to those challenges.
- ii. A process to recruit new independent governors continued. 11 candidates would be invited to interview and these would take place in late October or early November.
- iii. The process to recruit a new Chancellor for the university continued. It was hoped that an appointment might be made in time for the graduation ceremonies in November 2021, or shortly thereafter.

Following the Chair's update, the Vice-Chancellor (VC) delivered an update [016] concerning a range of recent developments in relation to the university and the higher education sector as a whole. Key developments included:

- iv. DMU continued to report low COVID-19 infection rates among staff and students. Testing continued to be offered on campus and some COVID-19 safety measures remained in place, including encouraging the wearing of face coverings inside university buildings.
- v. Since the board's previous meeting, the university had received two important data sets: the National Student Survey (NSS) and the Graduate Outcomes survey. These results had been disappointing for DMU and the university's approach to making improvements in both data sets had been outlined to governors at the 23 September 2021 meeting of the Finance and Performance Committee.
- vi. The university continued to monitor carefully its UKVI completion rates, which were currently tracking slightly above the limit. The Audit Committee would continue to monitor the issue, which was likely to be widespread across the sector

given the international impact of COVID-19. It was noted that the university had introduced a number of mitigations aimed at minimising the risk associated with UKVI completion rates, including requesting a larger deposit from applicants and strengthening credibility interviews.

- vii. The outcomes of the autumn Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR), and their impact on the higher education sector, were still unknown although an announcement was expected on 27 October 2021. Once the outcomes of the review had been announced, a summary of their impact on DMU would be circulated to governors.

RESOLVED:

- a. That the Chair's update be noted.
- b. That the Vice-Chancellor's update be noted.
- c. That, once known, the impact on DMU of the outcomes of the CSR would be circulated to governors.

017 DMU strategy update: 'The Empowering University'

The VC introduced a report [017] concerning draft narrative statements, which expanded upon the four pillars and cross-cutting themes of 'The Empowering University' strategy. The report also included draft key performance targets (KPTs) against which the implementation of the strategy would be measured. Arising from the discussion of this item, and questions from governors, the following points were highlighted:

- i. It was noted that the university was aiming, initially, to implement the strategy over a three-year period. A more detailed implementation plan would be shared with the board at a future meeting.
- ii. It was recognised that the draft KPTs would be developed further in the coming weeks. The board expressed a preference for the 'Model 3' approach to presenting the KPTs, which would focus on high-level targets, with subordinate targets being embedded in supporting strategies.
- iii. It was recognised that the new role of Chief Transformation Officer would be crucial in driving forward the digital transformation element of the strategy.
- iv. Under the 'Knowledge Creation' theme, it was suggested that the university might allow for research to be recognised both nationally and internationally, noting that some research had the potential to be highly significant within the UK but less so to the rest of the world.
- v. Each of the themes of the strategy would be led by a member of the University Leadership Board who would be held accountable for the progress made in that area.

RESOLVED:

- a. That, subject to the amendment noted at 017iv, the draft narrative statements be approved.
- b. That the draft KPTs be noted.
- c. That the 'Model 3' approach to the presentation of the KPTs be endorsed.

018 Education 2030

The Deputy VC delivered a presentation concerning the Education 2030 initiative. Arising from the discussion of this item, and questions from governors, the following points were highlighted:

- i. It was acknowledged that some academic staff had highlighted potential issues with the proposed 'block' mode of teaching, which included the pedagogical value of such an approach as well as the resource implications associated with its adoption. However, it was felt that, overall, colleagues welcomed the idea of a curriculum review, in particular the opportunity to rationalise the university's portfolio of programmes.
- ii. It would be important for the university to develop an offer that would be distinct in the market and more customer-focussed, allowing students the flexibility to study in the way that best suited their individual needs. It was recognised that getting to this point would require a significant amount of change, with some programmes of study having to be heavily rewritten or developed from scratch.
- iii. It would be critical to ensure that staff were engaging with the initiative, particularly given their role in the delivery of the curriculum and in helping to ensure that the revised approach to teaching was a success.
- iv. It would also be important to engage students in the development of the initiative thereby helping to ensure that the revised approach to teaching delivery was relevant and appropriate.
- v. It was recognised that Education 2030 would need to be resourced appropriately and that its requirements would need to be balanced against demands from other strategic projects such as transnational education and distance learning.
- vi. It was recognised that, whilst not ideal, the phased implementation of Education 2030 carried fewer risks than introducing it simultaneously for all students across all years of study.
- vii. Education 2030 was due to be considered by the Academic Board at its meeting on 13 October 2021. The outcomes of this consideration would be shared with governors following the meeting.

RESOLVED:

- a. That the presentation be noted.
- b. That the presentation would be uploaded to the board's SharePoint site following the meeting.
- c. That the outcomes of the discussion of Education 2030 with the Academic Board be shared with the Board of Governors following its meeting.

019 Recruitment and admissions update

The Executive Director of Marketing and Communications introduced a report [019] concerning the university's current position in terms of student recruitment. Arising from the discussion of this item, and questions from governors, the following points were highlighted:

- i. The university would be launching a new, primarily digital, advertising campaign in November 2021. A TV advert would continue to feature as part of the campaign but it was recognised that this element was less important than it had been in previous years.
- ii. The university was consistently ranked in the edurank top three for social media impact.
- iii. Where possible, the university would continue to undertake in-person recruitment activity such as open days and visits to schools and colleges, as well as carrying out surveys of, and holding focus groups with, applicants and new students.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

020 Financial impact of 2021/22 student recruitment

The Chief Finance and Resources Officer introduced a report [020] concerning the financial impact on DMU of the current and forecast position in terms of student recruitment.

RESOLVED:

- a. That the financial impact, as outlined in the report, be noted.
- b. That the additional increase of 1.25% in employer National Insurance contributions, as announced by the Government on 7 September 2021, be noted.
- c. That the actuarial Local Government Pension Scheme valuation and its impact on the financial position for 2021/22, as outlined in the report, be noted.
- d. That the short-term solutions aimed at addressing the financial impact in 2021/22 be noted.
- e. That the actions and timeframes set out in the report would be reviewed in light of the outcomes of the CSR, once they had been published.

021 National Student Survey and university league tables

The VC delivered a presentation concerning university league tables, focussing in particular on the 2022 tables and the impact of the NSS on DMU's performance. Arising from the discussion of this item, and questions from governors, the following points were highlighted:

- i. It was suggested that any significant improvements to the university's league table position might take two to three years to be realised, particularly where the benefits were being felt most keenly by current first- or second-year undergraduate students.
- ii. It was agreed that it would be critical to engage students in addressing the issues raised by the NSS, thereby helping to ensure that they would be more invested in the university's performance in the survey.
- iii. The university's plan for addressing its NSS performance had been shared in detail with the Finance and Performance Committee at its meeting on 23 September 2021. It was suggested that the committee continue to receive progress updates at regular intervals, and that these updates be shared with the board.

RESOLVED:

- a. That the presentation be noted.
- b. That the Vice-Chancellor's presentation would be uploaded to the board's SharePoint site following the meeting.
- c. That future updates to the Finance and Performance Committee concerning progress towards addressing the issues raised by the NSS would be shared with the board.

Members of the University Leadership Board left the meeting at this point.

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

The Chair of the Board introduced a report [022] concerning the outcomes of appraisals that had been undertaken with governors over the summer, as well as a proposed training and development plan for governors for the 2021/22 academic year.

RESOLVED:

- a. That the appraisal report be noted.
- b. That the training and development plan, as presented, be approved.
- c. That governors contact the Corporate Governance Manager directly to identify the training sessions that they would like to attend.

023 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.

024 Date of the next meeting

The next meeting of the Board of Governors will take place 10:00 on Thursday 25 November 2021 in Queen's Building room 0.10 (Lecture Theatre A).

025 Any other business

University and College Union

Governors were advised that the University and College Union had issued notice of their intention to hold a national ballot of its members over pay and working conditions.

10:00-16:07