

<b>Minutes:</b>	Board of Governors
<b>Time and date:</b>	10:00, Thursday 6 July 2023
<b>Location:</b>	Conference Room 4, 1 Richmond Street
<b>Present:</b>	Ian Squires (Chair), Catherine Clarke (to item 160), Peter Collyer, Stuart Dawkins, Jonathan Kerry, Jonathan Mills, Katie Normington, Sardip Sandhu, Peter Tansley, and Paul Woodgates
<b>In attendance:</b>	Simon Bradbury (Pro Vice-Chancellor International) (items 151, 153, and 155d), James Evans (Deputy Director of Strategic Planning) (item 154 and 161), Mel Fowler (Executive Director of Marketing and Communications) (item 156), Richard Greene (Deputy Vice-Chancellor) (item 152), Steve Holgate (Interim Director of Estates and Facilities) (item 159), Chloe Keenan (Governance Officer), Debbie Muddimer (Director of Finance and Procurement), Susan Orr (Pro Vice-Chancellor Education) (item 155a), David Parkes (Director of Library and Student Services) (item 159), Shushma Patel (Pro Vice-Chancellor Student Experience) (item 160), Nikki Pierce (Registrar (Academic) and Secretary to the Board), Harpreet Sandhu (Head of Legal Services) (item 151)
<b>Secretary:</b>	Nick Jeffs; <a href="mailto:nick.jeffs@dmu.ac.uk">nick.jeffs@dmu.ac.uk</a>

*CONFIRMED*

**145 Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence had been received from Fiona Cownie, Richard Greene, Phil Grierson, Buddy Penfold, Beverley Shears, and Dan Toner. Apologies for an early departure had been received from Catherine Clarke.

**146 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.

**147a Minutes of the 11 May 2023 meeting**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the 11 May 2023 meeting of the Board of Governors be approved subject to minor amendments at items 129ii and 129iv.

**147b Minutes of the 8 June 2023 extraordinary meeting**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the 8 June 2023 extraordinary meeting of the Board of Governors be approved.

**148 Matters arising**

All of the matters arising [148] had been completed prior to the meeting or were scheduled for consideration at a future meeting of the board.

**149 Report from the Chair**

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

- i. The process to recruit up to three new independent governors continued with support from executive search firm, Odgers Berndtson. It was hoped that this process would be complete in time for the new governors to join the board for its first meeting of the 2023/24 academic year.
- ii. Governors' annual appraisals were underway; the outcomes would be considered as part of a report to the board at the meeting scheduled for 28 September 2023.
- iii. The governor drop-in session, held virtually on 3 July 2023, had proven to be successful. However, it was felt that future such sessions would benefit from being slightly more structured, and that attendance would be improved by advertising the dates of the sessions as early as possible in the academic year.
- iv. Fiona Cownie, who would be stepping down from the board on 31 July 2023, hoped to continue her membership of the Audit Committee as a co-opted member.
- v. Governors were reminded of their invitation to join the university's Community Partners Summer Garden Party, which would place in the grounds of Trinity House following the meeting.

RESOLVED:

That the update be noted.

**150 Report from the Vice-Chancellor**

The Vice-Chancellor introduced a report [150] 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 results of both the National Student Survey (NSS) and the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) were expected later in the summer; the NSS on 10 August 2023, and the TEF in September 2023. The results of both exercises would be shared with the board as they became available.
- ii. The university had estimated that c. 250 of the graduating cohort of students would be affected by the ongoing University and College Union industrial action. Each case would be considered under the recently approved emergency regulations that would allow for provisional awarding decisions to be made on the basis of an incomplete set of marks. The university would also be providing graduating students with letters that would explain their circumstances to any potential employer.

- iii. The university had begun to see the financial impact of the industrial action on students, with some having to cancel or rearrange travel and accommodation that had been booked for their graduation ceremonies.
- iv. The Vice-Chancellor had hosted a number of garden parties that were aimed at recognising staff who had contributed to some of the university's recent successes.
- v. The university had achieved 'Cyber Essentials' certification; governors were thanked for their role in modelling a positive approach to cyber security.
- vi. The university's internal 'University Student Survey', which was taken by level 4 and 5 students, had shown consistently higher rates of satisfaction amongst those studying on block teaching programmes (level 4) than those studying via a more traditional programme structure (level 5).
- vii. The university would shortly be holding interviews for the role of Pro Vice-Chancellor and Dean of Arts, Design and Humanities, and it was hoped that one independent governor would be able to join the interview panel. The interviews were scheduled to take place in-person on Wednesday 27 September at Trinity House. Governors were asked to indicate at the earliest opportunity if they would be willing to join the interview panel.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

**151** [Redacted]

**152** [Redacted]

**153** [Redacted]

**154** **Empowering University strategy update**

The Deputy Director of Strategic Planning introduced a report [154] concerning an update on DMU's performance against the key performance targets of the Empowering University strategy. Arising from the discussion of this item, and questions from governors, the following points were highlighted:

- i. Governors welcomed the university's performance in the first year of the Empowering University strategy, noting that those 12 months had seen a number of positive changes and improvements across the institution. It was suggested that thought be given to how the university might publicise these successes more widely.
- ii. It was noted that the strategy's KPTs not only measured the university's own performance, but also its performance relative to sector benchmarks. This might mean, therefore, that improvements in the university's internal performance may not translate into similar improvements in its position in the sector.
- iii. It was recognised that the university's awards and race pay gaps had increased over the course of the first year of the strategy. Governors were assured that work was underway to address these issues, including a full review of the university's recruitment processes, the recruitment of Fair Outcome Champions, and a focused analysis of programmes of study with the largest negative and positive awarding gaps.
- iv. It was agreed that the KPT focussing on student continuation (which had also worsened over the course of the first 12 months of the strategy) would remain a critical metric for the university and should continue to be measured despite the

potential for that particular Higher Education Statistics Agency performance indicator to be discontinued. It was noted that, should this happen, it would be more difficult for DMU to compare its performance in this area to that of the rest of the sector. It was suggested that a report exploring how the university was addressing continuation be brought to a future meeting of the board.

- v. It was recognised that digital transformation was an enabler, the success of which would be reflected across a variety of different areas and KPTs, rather than just one.

RESOLVED:

- a. That the report be noted.
- b. That a report exploring how the university was addressing continuation be brought to a future meeting of the board.

#### **155a Implementation plan update: Equality for All**

The Pro Vice-Chancellor Education introduced a report [155a] concerning the progress made by the university in meeting the targets associated with the 'success indicators' of the 'Equality for All' implementation plan. Arising from the discussion of this item, and questions from governors, the following points were highlighted:

- i. The report highlighted a number of positive developments that the university had made since the implementation plan had first been approved by the board, including achieving a Race Equality Charter 'Silver Award', the introduction of equality, diversity and inclusion champions on the University Leadership Board, and the appointment of a new Head of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.
- ii. It was noted that the university would be developing a new Access and Participation Plan for submission to the OfS in spring 2024. Workshops to support the development of the new plan would begin in the coming days.
- iii. The university would be working towards the completion of its Race Equality Charter action plan, and it was noted that the board would be kept apprised of progress in this regard in future implementation plan update reports.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

#### **155b Implementation plan update: Financial Strength**

The Director of Finance and Procurement introduced a report [155b] concerning the progress made by the university in meeting the targets associated with the 'success indicators' of the 'Financial Strength' implementation plan. Arising from the discussion of this item, and questions from governors, the following points were highlighted:

- i. Governors commended the university's faster than planned financial recovery.
- ii. It was noted that the report showed progress as being 'off track' for three associated activities, but the university was confident that these areas would be recoverable over the lifetime of the implementation plan.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

### **155c Implementation plan update: Knowledge Creation**

The Vice-Chancellor introduced a report [155c] concerning the progress made by the university in meeting the targets associated with the 'success indicators' of the 'Knowledge Creation' implementation plan.

In discussing the report, governors commended in particular the work the university had carried out with the East Midlands Chamber on the development of a new data and skills observatory. It was noted that the outcome of this work was now being sold into other areas of the country, and that the university had nominated it for a *Times Higher Education* award.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

### **155d Implementation plan update: Partnerships with Purpose**

The Pro Vice-Chancellor International introduced a report [155d] concerning the progress made by the university in meeting the targets associated with the 'success indicators' of the 'Partnerships with Purpose' implementation plan.

In discussing the report, it was recognised that, despite the issues currently being experienced in relation to certain aspects of DMU Dubai's operations, there was still a great deal of positive progress being made in relation to the university's partnerships work more generally, including its transnational education activities.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

### **156 Recruitment and admissions update**

The Executive Director of Marketing and Communications introduced a report [156] concerning the university's performance in terms of student recruitment. Arising from the discussion of this item, and questions from governors, the following points were highlighted:

- i. It was noted that applications for NHS programmes continued to fall behind the number received in the previous year, and that conversion rates for those programmes did not reflect the university's positive performance elsewhere in its portfolio. It was suggested that this decrease in demand reflected difficulties in recruiting to these programmes across the sector, and that the issue was likely to be symptomatic of recent negative media coverage of the NHS, and a national decrease in the number of mature students applying to study at university.
- ii. It was noted that the university had made some changes to the way in which its recruitment operations were structured, including the creation of a 'Future Students' team with the aim of developing a seamless, student-centred approach to admissions.
- iii. It was recognised that an improvement in the university's league table position would also help to drive an improvement in its recruitment performance. However, it was accepted that any turnaround in this area was likely to take place over the course of a number of years.

- iv. It was felt that the 'Your DMU Community' campaign had had a positive impact on the current year's conversion performance, with over 8,000 calls being made to offer holders by current DMU students.
- v. It was noted that the key dates for Clearing 2023 would be Thursday 17 and Friday 18 August. It was suggested that governors would be welcome to visit DMU on one of those days in order to observe the university's Clearing operations first-hand.
- vi. **[Redacted]**
- vii. It was also hoped that planned future developments in the university's portfolio would help to drive notable increases in the number of applicants.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

## **157 Medium-term Financial Plan**

The Director of Finance and Procurement introduced a report [157], and delivered a presentation, concerning the university's Medium-Term Financial Plan for the period 2023/24 to 2027/28. In addition, the Chair of the Finance and Performance Committee provided a summary of that committee's consideration and approval of the plan, which had taken place at its meeting on 13 June 2023. Arising from the discussion of this item, and questions from governors, the following points were highlighted:

- i. It was agreed that, despite a return to a positive financial position in 2022/23, it would be critical for the university to remain focussed on cost control where possible.
- ii. **[Redacted]**
- iii. It was felt that ongoing resource allocation work would be key in ensuring a strong and stable financial base for the middle and outer years of the plan, recognising that there would likely be a number of pressures at those points, especially from costs associated with the university's pension schemes.
- iv. It was noted that the plan assumed the freezing of tuition fees at £9,250 throughout the five years. It was agreed that there would likely come a point when such a freeze was untenable, but that the current status quo was not likely to change in the immediate future.
- v. It was recognised that student recruitment was likely to remain challenging across the sector in future years, but that the university would continue to seek and develop ways in which it might diversify its income so as to be less reliant on undergraduate tuition fees.

RESOLVED:

- a. That the Medium-Term Financial Plan 2023/24 to 2027/28, as outlined in the report, be approved.
- b. That the plan's future inclusion in the university's Annual Accountability Return, which would be submitted to the OfS by 26 January 2024, be noted.

## **158 [Redacted]**

## **159 Library Development Project overview**

The Interim Director of Estates and Facilities, and the Director of Library and Student Services, introduced a report [159] concerning an overview of the Library Development Project. In addition, the Chair of the Finance and Performance Committee provided a

summary of that committee's consideration and approval of the business case for the design fees element of the project, which had taken place at its meeting on 13 June 2023. Arising from the discussion of this item, and questions from governors, the following points were highlighted:

- i. Governors welcomed the proposal, recognising that a library was a key part of the university's offer to its students, and their subsequent experience.
- ii. It was noted that the final business case for the project, including the full capital bid, would be submitted to the board for its consideration in due course and following the completion of the design phase.

RESOLVED:

- a. That that Finance and Performance Committee's approval of £2.8m of funding for the design fees element of the Library Development Project be noted.
- b. That the final business case for the project would be presented to the Finance and Performance Committee and the Board of Governors in due course and following the completion of the design phase.

## **160 Student Experience Programme update**

The Pro Vice-Chancellor Student Experience delivered a presentation concerning the progress that had been made to date in the university's Student Experience Programme. Arising from the discussion of this item, and questions from governors, the following points were highlighted:

- i. It was recognised that there were as many 'student experiences' as there were students. Governors emphasised that the university would need to ensure that the work it was undertaking in this area would be of benefit to all students, regardless of their individual circumstances or where they were studying (i.e. in the UK at the university's Leicester and London campuses, or at an overseas campus such as Kazakhstan or Dubai).
- ii. Recognising that some students' principal focus was their studies, the university would think about ways in which these individuals might be encouraged to explore a broader experience that would encompass more of what the university had to offer.
- iii. The next stage of the project would be to explore the outcomes of the 'Student Journey Mapping' exercise (including the differences between the student and staff perspectives of that journey), and the 'Defining the DMU Student Experience' work, with a view to arriving at a set of recommendations as to how best to implement the proposed improvements.

RESOLVED:

That the presentation be noted.

*Catherine Clarke left the meeting at this point*

## **161 Risk management update**

The Deputy Director of Strategic Planning introduced a report [161] concerning the university's approach to risk management and its corporate risk register. In addition, the Chair of the Audit Committee provided a summary of that committee's consideration of this subject, which had taken place at its meeting on 12 June 2023. Arising from the

discussion of this item, and questions from governors, the following points were highlighted:

- i. Governors welcomed the university's revised approach to risk management and its refreshed corporate risk register.
- ii. It was noted that that the university's Risk Management Committee would continue to fine-tune the corporate risk register over time and that, in due course, it was intended to move towards using mitigated scores rather than raw scores.

RESOLVED:

- a. That the revised corporate risks, as outlined in the report, be noted.
- b. That the simplified approach to risk scoring and risk appetite, as outlined in the report, be noted.
- c. That the university's approach to mapping risks to appetite be noted.
- d. That the example summary risk register, as included at Appendix C to the report, be noted.

## **162 Degree Outcomes Statement**

The Registrar (Academic) and Secretary to the Board introduced a report [162] concerning the university's Degree Outcomes Statement, which had been considered and approved by the Academic Board at its meeting on 3 May 2023.

RESOLVED:

That the Degree Outcomes Statement be approved. The statement would be published on the university's website following the meeting.

## **163 Ofsted Self-Assessment Report and Quality Improvement Plan**

It was noted that the Self-Assessment Report and Quality Improvement Plan that had been circulated to the board prior to the meeting had not been the most up to date versions of those documents. It was agreed the most up to date versions of both documents would be circulated to the board following the meeting and that governors would be asked to provide any comments that they might have via email.

RESOLVED:

That the most up to date versions of the Self-Assessment Report and Quality Improvement Plan would be circulated to the board following the meeting.

## **164 Member's updates**

### **i. Audit Committee**

The unconfirmed minutes of the committee's meeting of 12 June 2023 were included at item 171. In addition, the Chair of the committee highlighted the following:

- The committee had considered internal audit reviews concerning equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) ('partial assurance with improvements required'), and international partnership management ('significant assurance with minor improvement opportunities'). The principal area of

concern in the former had related to the absence of a formal annual report to the board covering EDI. This issue would be addressed from 2023/24 with the addition of an annual report to the board's cycle of business.

- An update on the university's student complaints procedures had suggested that the introduction of Early Resolution Officers was helping to manage issues locally without recourse to a formal complaint.
- The emphasis of future reporting to the committee concerning whistleblowing would take the form of assurance around the operation of the university's related policies.
- The committee continued to monitor the university's UK Visas and Immigration related metrics, particularly in light of the non-continuation rate being reported by DMU International College.

#### ii. Finance and Performance Committee

The unconfirmed minutes of the committee's meeting of 13 June 2023 were included at item 173. In addition, the Chair of the committee highlighted the following:

- The committee had approved the Medium-Term Financial Plan and the business case for the design fees element of the Library Development Project.
- Given the significant improvement in DMU's financial position when compared to the previous Medium-Term Financial Plan, the committee had agreed that it would be useful for the university to review its approach to forecasting to try and ensure that there would be a greater degree of accuracy in future.
- The committee had met informally with JP Morgan on 6 June 2023 to explore in greater depth some aspects of the university's investment portfolio that, due to the pressure of time, had only been touched on briefly at the committee's meeting on 2 March 2023.

#### iii. People and Culture Committee

The minutes of the committee's meeting of 24 April 2023, and the unconfirmed minutes of the committee's meeting of 19 June 2023, were included at items 175 and 176. In the absence of the Chair of the committee, no additional points were highlighted.

#### iv. Lead governors for Ofsted and skills

There was no update to provide at this meeting.

#### v. Academic Board

The minutes of the 3 May 2023 meeting of Academic Board (AB) were included at item 178. In addition, the board's Academic Board observer highlighted the following:

- The reports that were being submitted to AB were now seeing a real sense of alignment and engagement with the Empowering University strategy, and a keenness to know where the university would be going next.

- AB had discussed the extension of the university's 'No Space for Hate' initiative to include staff, and other members of the university's community, as well as students.
- AB had also discussed artificial intelligence, including the ways in which the library would be working to mitigate the potential impact of chatbots such as ChatGPT on academic integrity.

RESOLVED:

That the updates be noted.

#### **165 Constitutional documents**

The Registrar (Academic) and Secretary to the Board introduced a report [165] concerning proposed revisions to the university's key constitutional documents, including the Scheme of Delegation, the Instrument and Articles of Government, the Standing Orders, and the board's cycle of business for 2023/24. It was noted that the Scheme of Delegation, the Instrument and Articles of Government, and the Standing Orders had been reviewed and recommended to the board by the Audit Committee at its meeting on 12 June 2023.

RESOLVED:

- a. That the proposed revisions to the Scheme of Delegation be approved.
- b. That the proposed revisions to the Instrument and Articles of Government be approved.
- c. That the proposed revisions to the Standing Orders be approved.
- d. That the board's cycle of business for 2023/24 be approved.

#### **166 CUC Higher Education Code of Governance compliance assessment 2022/23**

The Registrar (Academic) and Secretary to the Board introduced a report [166] concerning an assessment of the university's compliance with the Committee of University Chairs' (CUC) Higher Education Code of Governance.

In discussing this item, it was noted that the board would give some further thought to how it might further strengthen its relationship with the Academic Board, including a potential meeting to discuss each body's plan of work for the forthcoming academic year.

RESOLVED:

- a. That the university's compliance with the CUC Higher Education Code of Governance, pending those actions due to be completed by the end of July 2023, be noted.
- b. That the amended compliance document, included as Appendix A to the report, be approved. The document would be published on the university's website following the meeting.

#### **167 Committee constitutions for 2023/24**

The Registrar (Academic) and Secretary to the Board introduced the constitutions for 2023/24 of the Audit Committee, the Finance and Performance Committee, and the People and Culture Committee.

RESOLVED:

That the constitutions for 2023/24 of the Audit Committee, the Finance and Performance Committee, and the People and Culture Committee be endorsed.

**168 Proposal for staff and student governor attendance at committee meetings**

The Registrar (Academic) and Secretary to the Board introduced a report [168] concerning two proposed approaches to having student and staff governors attend meetings of the Audit Committee, the Finance and Performance Committee, and the People and Culture Committee.

In discussing this item, governors recognised the importance of maintaining the independence, size, and balance of the aforementioned committees but agreed that it would be useful from a development point of view for staff and student governors to have experience of their business. Ultimately, the board agreed to the following approach:

- Staff and student governors would be offered the opportunity to attend more than one meeting of each of the aforementioned committees per academic year.
- Only one staff and one student governor could be in attendance at each meeting.
- Staff and student governors would be welcome to contribute to each committee's discussions but would not have a vote.
- The attendance of staff and student governors at committees would be reviewed by the board at its meeting on 16 May 2024.

RESOLVED:

That the proposed approach to staff and student governor attendance at meetings of the Audit Committee, the Finance and Performance Committee, and the People and Culture Committee, as outlined above, be approved, effective from the 2023/24 academic year.

**169 Proposed agenda for the Board of Governors' strategic away day on 19 October 2023**

The Registrar (Academic) and Secretary to the Board introduced the proposed agenda [169] for the board's strategic away day, which was scheduled to take place on 19 October 2023.

RESOLVED:

That the proposed agenda be approved. It was noted that a dinner would be held for governors prior to the away day on the evening of 18 October 2023. Further details would be circulated to governors in due course.

**170 Annual board effectiveness survey 2022/23**

The Registrar (Academic) and Secretary to the Board introduced a report [170] concerning the status of the actions arising from the 2021/22 annual board effectiveness survey, and the approach that would be taken to the survey for 2022/23.

RESOLVED:

- a. That the status of the actions arising from the 2021/22 annual board effectiveness survey be noted.

- b. That the proposed approach to the survey for 2022/23, including the extension of the survey to the Audit Committee, Finance and Performance Committee, and People and Culture Committee, be noted.

**171 Unconfirmed minutes of the 12 June 2023 meeting of the Audit Committee**

RESOLVED:

That the unconfirmed minutes [171] be noted.

**172 Audit Committee cycle of business 2023/24**

RESOLVED:

That the cycle of business [172] be noted.

**173 Unconfirmed minutes of the 13 June 2023 meeting of the Finance and Performance Committee**

RESOLVED:

That the unconfirmed minutes [173] be noted.

**174 Finance and Performance Committee cycle of business 2023/24**

RESOLVED:

That the cycle of business [174] be noted.

**175 Minutes of the 24 April 2023 meeting of the People and Culture Committee**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes [175] be noted.

**176 Unconfirmed minutes of the 19 June 2023 meeting of the People and Culture Committee**

RESOLVED:

That the unconfirmed minutes [176] be noted.

**177 People and Culture Committee cycle of business 2023/24**

RESOLVED:

That the cycle of business [177] be noted.

**178 Minutes of the 3 May 2023 meeting of the Academic Board**

RESOLVED:

That the minutes [178] be noted.

**179 Changes to academic governance**

RESOLVED:

That the report [179] be noted.

**180 De Montfort Students' Union elections report**

RESOLVED:

That the report [180] be noted.

**181 Items placed under the university seal since the previous meeting**

RESOLVED:

That the report [181] be noted.

**182 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.

**183 Date of the next meeting**

The next meeting of the Board of Governors would take place at 10:00 on Thursday 28 September 2023 in Bede House, room 0.46.

**184 Any other business**

No items were raised.

*Meeting duration: 10:00-14:54*