



The
University
Of
Sheffield.

Office
Of
The President &
Vice-Chancellor.

UEB/2020/2209/02

Minutes University Executive Board

Date: 30 June 2020

Present: Professor K Lamberts (KL) (in the Chair)

Professor J Derrick (JD), Professor S Fitzmaurice (SF), Ms J Jones (JJ), Professor M J Hounslow (MJH) Professor W Morgan (WM), Professor C Newman (CN), Professor D Petley (DNP), Mr R Sykes (RS), Professor C Watkins (CW)

In attendance: Dr T Strike (TS), Mr I Wright (IW), Dr S Want (SW) (item 1), Ms B Abrams (BA) (item 2)

Apologies: Professor S Hartley (SH), Professor G Valentine (GV)

Secretary: Mr M Borland (MB) / Mr N Button (NB)

1. Knowledge Exchange Update

(Dr S Want in attendance for this item)

1.1 UEB considered an update to the University's Knowledge Exchange (KE) performance and the progress in maintaining KE support systems. Attention was drawn to the RAG rating that anticipated the University's performance in the Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF) and the main areas of concern arising from that, and the need for different KE priorities in different parts of the University.

1.2 During discussion, UEB noted the following:

- The Departmental Framework allowed for significant variation in innovation systems and areas of work.
- The underperforming areas were often those with which it was hardest to capture accurate data.
- Universities were increasingly using low-level consultancy work as a way of building partnerships with external organisations.
- KE work often did not yield short-term returns and a longer term view should be taken on outputs in some areas.
- Other universities had coordinated their CPD work centrally combined with the locally relevant expertise.

1.3 UEB reaffirmed the importance of Knowledge Exchange to the University's future strategic direction. It agreed that priorities would be developed in line with the Departmental framework, that measurement of outputs should take into account the often long-term nature of this work and should be seen in their local contexts, and that numerical targets were desirable as the KEF continued to develop and would allow the University to take informed decisions about where to invest in this work.

2. Closed Minute and Paper

3. Update from Student Lifecycle Regulatory Assurance Group

3.1 Revised Terms of Reference

3.1.1 UEB considered the revised Terms of Reference for the Student Lifecycle Regulatory Assurance Group that had replaced the Consumer Protection Law Steering Group. The Group had been developed in response to the OfS Value for Money (VfM) strategy. Although the OfS had amended its regulatory regime in light of the Covid-19 pandemic, UEB noted it was still the intention of the Group to deliver a University VfM strategy to Council in November 2020.

3.1.2 UEB noted and supported the terms of reference and noted the change in membership to include the Head of Policy. It was also noted that the Group was not directly accountable to UEB, but was instead intended to support the work of the Executive Director of Academic Services. Guidance on student consumer protection had recently been sent to FDLTs and FDOs and could be copied to FVPs on request.

3.2 Provision of Programme Information

3.2.1 UEB considered recommendations on the provision of programme information. This had been initiated following a PwC audit that had identified the ongoing risk in the presentation of programme information to prospective students. Ensuring consistency of message was important given the multiple sources of information such as print prospectuses, digital prospectuses, Departmental webpages and Departmental brochures, and the fact that information often became out of date very quickly. Although compliance across the University was reasonable, there was room for improvement.

3.2.2 UEB approved the recommendations as set out in the paper, including:

- Essential material information would not be published anywhere else on University webpages or in print materials other than the main print prospectus.
- Accountability for Departmental web content would sit at faculty level with appropriate oversight in place from the Faculty Recruitment and Marketing Manager / Communications Manager.
- All print materials, such as Departmental recruitment brochures, should follow an agreed template that meets the needs of the audience and does not duplicate content that is online or could become quickly out of date.

4. Coronavirus Update

4.1 Local lockdowns

UEB noted the lockdown situation that was developing in Leicester and agreed the University would need to prepare for the possibility of a local lockdown in Sheffield. The options that the estate presented for provision that met the guidelines were proving limiting. Work had been completed on preparations for moving the largest PGT courses online, should that be required. It had been stressed to Departments that decisions should be taken at a programme level and not at a modular level. Communications with prospective students would be undertaken centrally.

4.2 Research support package

UEB were updated on the details of the Government's recently announced support package for research in higher education institutions. Attention was drawn to the two parts of the support package: an extension of funding through UKRI and a package of

low-interest long-term loans. It was expected that institutions would demonstrate significant efficiency savings in exchange for accessing this support.

During discussion, UEB noted the following:

- Due to the conditions of their Bank Covenants, it was possible that many universities would not be able to access the loans portion of the support package.
- The package presented a communications challenge in ensuring that it remained widely understood that the University would have to continue with its planned revenue savings.
- Continuing to hold off utilisation of the Revolving Credit Facility gave the University greater flexibility if the financial situation were to worsen.
- It was likely that there would be other, non-financial, conditions attached to utilisation of the support package.

4.3 PPE and Testing

UEB noted that on the use of masks, it was likely that students and staff would be “strongly encouraged” to wear them while on campus. The availability and frequency of testing was a matter for the local Director of Public Health.

4.4 Air Travel

UEB were updated on the decisions of other universities and the expected position of airlines in ensuring that international students were able to travel to the UK for the start of the next academic year.

5. **Report of the IT Sub-Group**

(Meeting held on 10 June)

5.1 UEB noted the report of IT Sub-Group meeting of 10 June. Attention was drawn to the very high compliance rate among staff with the move to Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA) for remote working.

6. **Closed Minute and Paper**

7. **Round Table**

- (a) UEB Away Day: Information regarding preparatory work for the forthcoming away day would be circulated to UEB shortly.
- (b) Recruitment position: WM updated UEB on the University’s recruitment position
- (c) Years abroad: WM informed UEB that the University would support students on a mandatory year abroad, subject to FCO approval, and that student hardship funds could be accessed to repatriate students if required.
- (d) Voluntary Severance Scheme: IW updated UEB on the number of applications received through the Voluntary Severance Scheme. It was expected that there would be an increase ahead of the forthcoming deadline.
- (e) Senate elections: TS informed UEB that the Senate elections had closed. A note with the results would be circulated shortly.
- (f) Student Protection Plan: TS informed UEB that Senate had approved the University’s new Student Protection Plan. It had subsequently been submitted to the OfS but the previous version still remained in force until it had been approved by the regulator.

- (g) Course closure: TS reminded UEB of the OfS reporting requirements for course closure, noting that the OfS response had been mixed to other university submissions so far.