



The
University
Of
Sheffield.

Office UEB/2019/1106/02
Of
The President &
Vice-Chancellor.

Minutes University Executive Board

Date: 07 May 2019

Present: Professor K Lamberts (KL) (in the Chair),
Professor J Derrick (JD), Mrs H J Dingle (HJD),
Professor S Fitzmaurice (SF), Professor M J Hounslow (MJH),
Professor J Marsh (JM), Professor D Petley (DP),
Professor Dame Pamela J Shaw (PJS), Mr R Sykes (RS),
Professor G Valentine (GV),

In attendance: Dr T Strike (TS); Dr R Birch (RHB) (items 1 and 2); Professor K Ridgway (KR), Mr I Chambers (IC), Mr J Yates (JY) (item 1); Mr J Busson (JB) (item 2); Mrs V E Jackson (VEJ) (item 3)

Apologies: Professor C Watkins (CW)

Secretary: Mr D T Swinn (DTS)

1. Closed Minute

2. Access and Participation Plan 2020/21 to 2024/25 (Mr J Busson in attendance for this item)

- 2.1 UEB received an update from the Access and Participation Plan (APP) working group and considered the proposed approach to the University's APP 2020/21 to 2024/25. The APP was a regulatory requirement under the OfS, which had substantially changed both the APP format and its expectations of HEIs. In particular, plans would now be over a five-year period, focused on impact and outcomes and with less emphasis on expenditure per se. Significantly more data had been made available to inform the University APP than in previous years, and this data had facilitated greater evaluation of the University's position relative to its peers. It was noted that failure to meet the targets and milestones contained in the final APP would be a reportable event.
- 2.2 UEB discussed the proposed areas of focus for the institutional APP, the level of ambition shown and realism of the proposed targets, and the implications and associated risks. It was noted that the OfS had appeared to disregard the risk that its current approach and guidance may lead to the emergence of two distinct cohorts of students. Furthermore, the revised approach would not credit universities for valuable outreach work that supported the wider access and WP agenda without increasing recruitment of under-represented student groups to that particular institution. It was also reported that UCAS had brought forward the introduction of greater applicant flexibility over accepting offers during Confirmation, Adjustment and Clearing from 2019, rather than 2020.

2.3 Actions:

- (a) The final draft APP would be circulated to UEB during the week commencing 13 May, prior to a final discussion at the 21 May UEB and submission to the OfS by the 24 May deadline.
- (b) Further discussions with individual Faculties would consider how they might contribute to achieving particular targets.
- (c) The OfS would be asked for its view on taking a more balanced view that considered student recruitment across all POLAR groups and encouraged a more sophisticated approach to measuring deprivation.
- (d) Further consideration would be given to the implications of additional applicant flexibility on student recruitment and admissions.

3. Finance

(Vicki Jackson in attendance for this item)

3.1 Sector Information

UEB received a presentation analysing the OfS report on the Financial Health of the Sector and the University's relative position in a number of key areas, considering the reasons for this reported performance and areas of strength and weakness. The OfS report had concluded that the sector as a whole was showing too much ambition in its financial forecasts. It had also emphasised the importance of operating cashflow rather than focusing on the generation of surplus/deficit, in recognition of volatility in reported performance under FRS102. The following points were noted in discussion:

- External pressure, including the potential reduction in home UG tuition fees and student eligibility for SLC finance, significantly increased the level of risk to which a number of institutions were exposed.
- There was significant unrealised potential for the University to generate higher income from donations and endowments.
- The University performed strongly in terms of operating cash as a percentage of income, which had enabled capital projects to be funded without borrowing and increasing exposure to financial risk. Operating cash was also increasing year on year, compared to decreases across the sector.
- Overall sector borrowings were increasing and the OfS had indicated its intention to closely scrutinise the level of individual institutional borrowings in the context of their strategic objectives.

Action:

- (a) Further competitive analysis would be undertaken in the context of reported financial positions, ongoing external challenges and uncertainty, and the make-up of respective student populations.

3.2 Closed Minute

4. Round Table

- (a) USS Pensions: The USS Trustee was expected to publish its response to the outcome of the recent UUK employer consultation in the next week.

- (b) Annual American Alumni Reunion: KL and GV had attended the annual reunion in San Francisco on 4 May.
- (c) Engineering Research Income: The latest HESA data showed that the University had overtaken Imperial and was now ranked first nationally for research income generation. This was a significant achievement and should be celebrated.
- (d) Senate elections: Council had approved changes to the composition and membership of Senate on 29 April and a call for nominations for elected places had been published on 2 May.
- (e) Student Recruitment data: Universities were required by the OfS to publish certain student recruitment data in August. It was reported that all Russell Group institutions had received a related FoI request and the University was considering its response.