



Minutes University Executive Board

Date: 24 October 2017

Present: Professor G Valentine (GV) (in the Chair),
Mrs H J Dingle (HJD), Mr A Dodman (AD), Professor S Fitzmaurice (SF),
Professor M J Hounslow (MJH), Professor D Petley (DP),
Professor Dame Pamela J Shaw (PJS), Professor C Watkins (CW)

In attendance: Dr T Strike (TS); Mr R Sykes (RS) (items 4-10); Mrs V E Jackson (VEJ)
(items 5-7);

Apologies: Professor N Clarke (NC), Professor Sir Keith Burnett (KB),
Professor W Morgan (WM),

Secretary: Mr D T Swinn

1. Minutes of UEB held on 3 October 2017

(UEB/2017/2410/01)

- 1.1 The Minutes of the meeting held on 3 October were approved as an accurate record, subject to amendment to the bullet point at Minute 2 relating to bibliometric indicators, to read: A KPI related to 4 star outputs should be retained, the exact nature of which to be proposed by DP.

Matter Arising: GV was considering suggestions for strategic themes for future UEB discussions.

2. Notes of UEB Away Day held on 10 October 2017

(UEB/2017/2410/02)

- 2.1 The Notes of the Away Day held on 10 October were approved as an accurate record.

3. Minutes of UEB held on 17 October 2017

(UEB/2017/2410/03)

- 3.1 The Minutes of the meeting held on 17 October were approved as an accurate record.

Matter Arising:

Action: GV reminded FVPs to provide examples of innovative recruitment practices that could be presented at UEB-HoDs fora in November and January.

4. Review of Research Support - Faculty Based Research Support

(UEB/2017/2410/04)

(RS in attendance for this item)

- 4.1 UEB considered a framework for the review of faculty-based research support to build on the review of central research support that concluded in February 2017 and was currently being implemented. The framework included a series of principles for locally based support, although it was recognised that different models operated across the faculties; and proposed that any changes would be implemented from the start of 2018/19.

- 4.2 It was suggested that the strategic rationale and purpose of the review was clarified to avoid misinterpretation and ensure consistency. The planning steer set out a small number of institutional priorities but that did not mean that other issues were no longer important. Clarification was also provided about the nature and purpose of some locally based roles and further detail would be provided to assist colleagues. It was noted that the initial stages of the review would focus on design and faculty discussions may need to take into account related initiatives around PGR student and post-award support.
- 4.3 Subject to the points raised in discussion, UEB agreed to recommend approval of the review, commencing with faculties developing proposals in response to the principles set out in the related paper. These would be considered as a whole by SDG after the end of February 2017, including taking into account the possible need to align actions across faculties.

Actions:

- Faculties would develop their proposals by the end of February 2017;
- Further details to be provided about references to locally-based roles;
- SDG would provide an update to UEB in due course;
- Underlying baseline data would be re-run and validated by FDOs to assist faculties;

5. Corporate Financial Report for the period ending 30 September 2017
(UEB/2017/2410/05)

(VEJ and RS in attendance for this item)

- 5.1 UEB received and noted the first of a newly introduced corporate financial report intended to supplement monthly management information and quarterly financial reporting by providing more up to date analysis of performance to date and the forecast outturn compared to budgets. It provided analysis at institutional level and Faculty & AMRC level and included historic data for comparative purposes. Future iterations would contain details of Professional Services and Shared costs. The report was intended to facilitate collective UEB discussion as well as at faculty-level.
- 5.2 It was noted that additional action was required to ensure the effective management of expenditure in line with budgets and to increase income. Although there was a range of existing or planned activity that would have a medium-term financial benefit, there was a short-term need to significantly improve overall performance. The current review of resource allocation would not resolve the most significant issues highlighted by this analysis. It was reported that further thought would be given to how to resolve the difficulties caused by not knowing the actual income position until 1 December, which is becoming increasingly untenable. Members welcomed the report as a positive development and noted the planned enhancements:

Actions:

- HJD/VEJ to consider whether comparative information from the July forecast could be included;
- Future iterations may benefit from additional narrative;
- The introduction of a RAG rating to direct the reader was welcomed, but the reports could also focus on a specific theme or particular faculty for UEB to consider

6. Borrowings
(UEB/2017/2410/06)

(VEJ and RS in attendance for this item)

- 6.1 UEB received and noted a report on the University's current and potential requirements for borrowings, in particular the status of the current Revolving Credit

Facility and the continuing need to protect liquidity. Finance Committee would be asked to establish a dedicated sub-group to consider borrowings with the power to engage external advisers and make recommendations.

7. Capital Report

(UEB/2017/2410/07)

(VEJ and RS in attendance for this item)

- 7.1 UEB received and noted a report analysing profiled uninflated capital spend to 2021 in the context of the estates strategy and approved and planned projects. It included modelling of the effect of three options for the profiling and phasing of projects and associated cash flows, including the impact on borrowing requirements.
- 7.2 UEB endorsed the steer of the President & Vice-Chancellor to delay a number of inter-related projects by one year in order to reduce profiled annual capital cash outflows closer to an agreed investment limit. This should enable delivery of the current capital plan on the basis of the existing financial forecasts. UEB noted that there were a range of uncertainties and risks facing the sector and that work to enhance internal costs management and increase income was still in progress. It was also noted that agreeing new borrowing would incur additional debt servicing charges that would not be offset by any additional income generation due to the financed project until it was complete, which could be c.3 years.

Actions:

- Proceed with previously planned formal governance approvals, subject to the one-year delay and letting of contracts;
- Consider the impact of that decision on the wider estate, in particular areas deemed high risk. These issues would be discussed in the context of the overall capital pipeline and planning round outcomes as part of the UEB Away Day in May.

8. Due Diligence and Risk Management Framework for Overseas Research

(UEB/2017/2410/08)

(RS in attendance for this item)

- 8.1 UEB endorsed a due diligence and risk management framework to support overseas research partnerships in response to the changed research funding environment. The University was effectively required to enter into partnerships with a wider range of bodies at a greater scale whilst retaining the associated financial and reputational risks.
- 8.2 It was noted that the framework sought to balance the need for robust risk management with the need to minimise the burden of compliance on colleagues, whilst being clear about respective responsibilities and the professional support available. The approach was relatively light-touch compared to others in the sector but RCUK had indicated that it was appropriate.

Actions:

- The framework would be presented for formal approval by Research & Innovation Committee and Senate in due course;
- Ensure that the need to take risk in order to obtain benefit was clearly reflected in the framework, and the consequent need to balance risk with potential reward;
- Review the framework after c.18 months of operation in the same way as was planned for the institutional Code of Ethics which was recently updated.

9. Closed Minute and Paper

10. PLA Road Map 2017

(UEB/2017/2410/10)

(RS in attendance for this item)

- 10.1 UEB considered an overview of proposed department, faculty and professional services actions that would lead to the delivery and embedding of Programme Level Approach during a transitional year in 2018/19. Proposed parallel work to review portfolios as means to support and facilitate PLA was also noted. It was also reported that student engagement was recognised as a key aspect of the PLA process and it would be important to ensure that faculties and professional support staff could access consistent advice in this regard.
- 10.2 Clarification was provided that PLA was the means of meeting external assessments and compliance requirements under the Learning and Teaching Strategy, for example by also capturing Sheffield Graduate attributes. In the medium to longer term PLA should facilitate consistent performance in matters relevant to the TEF but some specific short-term action might be required to complement PLA.

Actions:

- Amend the paper to clarify (a) that applicable University Regulations should be reviewed to minimise and remove any administrative barriers to PLA and portfolio review; and (b) to reflect discussion at the UEB Away Day about what constituted a 'programme';
- UEB would receive a paper proposing portfolio review during November but the PLA process could start immediately.

11. BI/MI Project Update

(UEB/2017/2410/11)

- 11.1 In noting an update on the project and plans for evaluation activities, UEB recommended the formal closure of the project, which had delivered its intended outcomes on time and under budget. Functionality and analytical capability had increased significantly while risk had also been reduced, with further work in progress to build on these initial successes. UEB thanked those involved for their efforts.

12. Round Table

- (a) Health and Safety: AD would share a recent report to Health & Safety relating to departmental risk assessments, pending a paper to UEB in due course.
- (b) Corporate Communications: Members were asked to remind colleagues about the importance of informing the relevant Vice-President and Corporate Communications of any sensitive matter arising that may come into the public domain about which the University could be asked to comment by the media.
- (c) UEB Away Day: GV confirmed the format and agenda for the day, including additional attendees.
- (d) Research Councils: DP reported that the seven UK Research Councils and Innovate UK were replacing significant proportions of their respective boards and Members were asked to encourage colleagues to consider seeking appointment.
- (e) HEFCE Connecting Capability Scheme: Faculty proposals would be considered by Research Strategy Group in order to decide which one the University would submit.
- (f) Consultation on HE Regulation: TS reported that the Department for Education had launched its consultation on the future regulatory framework for the sector and a draft response would be provided to UEB and Officers' Informal Group in due course. A related exercise would consider the potential wider implications for the University.
- (g) Value for Money and Efficiency: HJD reported that HEFCE had removed the requirement to include VfM reports in the annual accountability return but had introduced an annual Efficiency Return. An appropriate approach was under consideration.
- (h) Conference for European Schools for Advanced Engineering Education and Research (CESAER): MJH reported that the University had been elected to join CESAER, which would present significant opportunities.
- (i) Fellows of the Academy of Social Sciences: On behalf of UEB, GV congratulated CW and Professor Jackie Marsh on their election as Fellows of the Academy of Social Sciences and Professor Peter Jackson on his election as a Fellow of the British Academy. The annual reception for Fellows would take place in due course.