



The
University
Of
Sheffield.

Office UEB/2018/0603/02
Of The
President &
Vice-Chancellor.

Minutes University Executive Board

Date: 27 February 2018

Present: Professor G Valentine (GV) (in the Chair),
Mrs H J Dingle (HJD), Professor J Derrick (JD),
Professor D Hadley (DH), Professor M J Hounslow (MJH),
Professor W Morgan (WM), Professor D Petley (DP),
Professor Dame Pamela J Shaw (PJS), Mr R Sykes (RS),
Professor C Watkins (CW)

In attendance: Dr T Strike (TS); Dr R Birch (item 3); Professor D Oglethorpe
and Mrs V Jackson (item 6); Mrs T Wray (items 9-10);
Mr R Gower (item 10)

Apologies: Professor Sir Keith Burnett (KB), Mr A Dodman (AD)

Secretary: Ms S M Stephens (SMS)

Welcome

UEB welcomed Rob Sykes, Director of Academic Services, to his first meeting.

1. Minutes of the meeting held on 13 February 2018 (UEB/2018/2702/001)

The Minutes of the meeting held on 13 February 2018 were approved as an accurate record.

Matters arising were noted as follows:

Minute 3.4(a), Library costs: Following an announcement by Taylor and Francis concerning journal costs, a separate UEB discussion would no longer be required.

2. Minutes of the meeting held on 20 February 2018 (UEB/2018/2702/002)

The Minutes of the meeting held on 20 February 2018 were approved as an accurate record.

Matters arising were noted as follows:

Minute 1, China: The President & Vice-Chancellor's recent presentation to Council would be circulated to UEB members.

3. Closed Minute and Paper

4. Faculty research support (UEB/2018/2702/004)

- 4.1 UEB considered an update on the future arrangements for research support at faculty level. It was noted that, following the restructuring of central research services, UEB

had in November 2017 agreed that each faculty should develop a model for local provision based on a number of agreed principles. Given the level of diversity between the different models now put forward by faculties, it was proposed that a small working group be convened to develop a common framework, including common roles, job titles and grades, but allowing for differences relating to discipline and scale.

- 4.2 Taking into account the need to minimise the impact of an extended review period on affected staff, UEB agreed that a working group should be convened at the earliest opportunity. It was also agreed that its membership should include either Faculty Directors of Operations or Faculty Directors of Research & Innovation, and that the group should seek to establish a common framework as a basis for revised faculty proposals, with a view to a final proposal being brought to UEB as soon as possible, and in advance of the timescale proposed in the paper. It would be important that the process of establishing a common framework served to provide faculties with the feedback necessary to revise their original proposals.

4.3 **Action:**

- FVPs to nominate either FDOs or FDR&Is to serve on the working group;
- DP and RS to convene a meeting of the working group.

5. Closed Minute and Paper

6. Report of the task and finish group to review the University's financial model

(UEB/2018/2702/006)

(David Oglethorpe and Vicki Jackson in attendance for this item)

- 6.1 UEB considered the report of the task and finish group established under the chairmanship of Professor David Oglethorpe to review the University's financial model. The group had undertaken considerable review, data collection, analysis and scenario modelling and had examined the means by which research costs, teaching costs and estate costs could be potentially better driven out via resource allocation, and also how tuition fee income could be better attributed to recognise structural, institutional or external constraints facing faculties. On behalf of UEB, GV thanked David Oglethorpe, Vicki Jackson and colleagues for their thorough review and clearly articulated proposals.
- 6.2 Recommended changes to the University's financial model involved:
- (a) allocating income to faculties by driving out UG home fee income and HEFCE T income according to a three-year moving average of peer group TRAC T real teaching costs, using relevant HESA cost centre categories at a departmental level;
 - (b) using the Strategic Allocation Fund (SAF) in a more targeted, strategically meaningful, justifiable and transparent way by identifying four sub-categories of SAF (relating to Sustainability, Research, Estates and Transition).
- 6.3 A substantial change to the policy on Prior Year Adjustments (PYAs) was recommended, which it was expected would incentivise more accurate planning by faculties and departments. A new policy would involve: providing access to positive PYAs over a three-year period, or longer at the Faculty's discretion; absorbing negative PYAs over a three-year period, or shorter at the Faculty's discretion; introducing a 'cap and collar' system based on the value of Net PYA; and not enabling write-offs to ensure full accountability and consequence from year to year.
- 6.4 It was also recommended that a new set of information, user guides, training tools and web-based help pages be developed to support implementation of a revised model at all levels.

6.5 UEB agreed that the new financial model, when adopted, will be used to set budgets by every faculty and all departments in line with the spirit of the Organisational Approach to achieve more consistency across the institution and also to facilitate understanding of the way university finances work amongst staff at all grades and therefore collective ownership of financial targets.

6.6 Points noted in discussion included:

- (a) Notwithstanding the link to teaching costs, the proposed method of allocating income would not alone serve to ameliorate the position of departments with high cost teaching. However, the application of an external benchmark to inform the allocation of income, combined with a clear and transparent approach to SAF, should provide a robust basis for determining where appropriate adjustments should be made.
- (b) The need to ensure that the adoption of an Estates SAF to address local tensions arising from short-term estate and space issues did not unintentionally encourage poor space usage. E-SAF should be based on objective measures and aligned with the institutional Estates Strategy.
- (c) The extent to which the proposed Research SAF (a partial cross-subsidisation of central research costs to reflect the fact that normally not more than 80% full cost recovery can be achieved through some external research grants) would address the issue and was sufficiently transparent.
- (d) With respect to PYAs, the need to address the tendency inherent in the current system to encourage over-forecasting of income. This suggested that the cap and collar threshold should be the same, and set above or equal to the marginal rate of return in the current Resource Allocation Model. This would be explored further through detailed scenario modelling.
- (e) The fact that the policy needs to continue to provide a mechanism for faculties to intentionally create reserves. This would be given further consideration.
- (f) The need for the finalised proposal and any supporting guidance to employ consistent terminology, reflecting the nature of PYA as a consequence of the previous year, in which the end of year surplus/deficit position is used to calculate budget changes, with these changes being the PYA.
- (g) Support for the proposal that as part of the transition to a revised financial model, legacy negative PYA should be written off, but legacy positive PYA honoured, to the extent of previously identified usage for strategically important purposes, e.g. capital.
- (h) Recognition that implementation of the review's recommendations would require all faculties to use the same model to set departmental budgets, allowing for a faculty-level SAF and Strategic Development Fund (SDF) to manage structural and other issues.

6.7 Subject to the points noted above, UEB endorsed the proposals and agreed the following next steps.

Action:

- work to be undertaken to model the revised approach against the financial forecasts, taking account the points raised, including in particular further consideration of Research SAF (see 6.6(c)), and the PYA 'cap and collar' proposal (see 6.6(d));
- a further report to be presented to UEB.

7. Closed Minute and Paper

8. Council and Senate task and finish group – academic standards and quality: update report

(UEB/2018/2702/008)

UEB noted an update on the work undertaken by a Council and Senate task and finish group to consider the arrangements for academic standards and quality to support Council in its duty to provide assurance in respect of the student academic experience and outcomes and the standard of awards. The group would make its recommendations to Council in April, and these were expected to:

- confirm the role of Senate in setting and maintaining academic standards and in ensuring and enhancing the quality of provision;
- confirm the actions needed to support Senate in this role, which were being progressed by means of a separate Senate Effectiveness Review;
- make proposals concerning the minimum content of an annual report from the Senate to Council;
- propose the establishment of a small Senate and Council sub-group to meet annually and advise on the matters, if any, to be specifically raised with Council;
- propose ways to support Council members in developing their knowledge and understanding of academic matters.

9. GDPR implementation: update from the Information Management Group

(UEB/2018/2702/009)

(Tracy Wray in attendance for this item)

9.1 UEB considered an update on work undertaken by the Information Management Group to respond to an external assessment of the University's GDPR readiness. An updated GDPR assessment was noted, including planned actions, and the following points noted:

- Proposals relating to email accounts required further consideration in the light of advice from HR and consideration of their wider impact, if possible leading to the identification of alternative solutions.
- Attention was drawn to the extensive work undertaken by the Research Ethics Committee to revise the University ethics process to reflect GDPR requirements. This would potentially include the scope to build an asset register, but it was important to note that this would not address historical data, and the Committee was working with CiCs to identify a solution, which was likely to require input from faculties and departments. Effective liaison between the Information Management Group and the Research Ethics Committee would be important.
- AD had commented by email to stress the importance of engagement and behaviour change at all levels, and to note the need for effective arrangements for dealing with FoI requests. The Information Management Group planned to develop a protocol to ensure that responses to novel and/or contentious requests were provided in a timely way and with appropriate authority.

9.2 Action:

It was agreed that the Group should continue its work, taking into account the points raised, and should provide a further report to UEB. It was also agreed that consideration should be given to the membership of the Group, which should be expanded if necessary to ensure sufficient academic representation.

10. Academic Careers Pathway project

(UEB/2018/2702/010)

(Rob Gower and Tracy Wray in attendance for this item)

- 10.1 UEB considered the Academic Career Pathway framework and the proposed communication and engagement plan for its launch. It was noted that in the period since the last report to UEB, extensive consultation had been undertaken, including with Vice-Presidents and Faculty Directors, with Heads of Department and with trade unions, feedback from which had resulted in a number of revisions to the earlier document.

10.2 **Action:**

It was agreed that a further, final review of the proposed framework should take place to address the points raised in discussion (that where different requirements applied for SRDS and promotion, these should be clearly articulated; and that the grade descriptors should be nuanced to provide an appropriate level of differentiation).

Members were asked to communicate any additional comments to TW and RG.

11. REF2021 Impact Case Study planning: update

(UEB/2018/2702/011)

UEB received an update on progress made since the UEB away day in October 2017, at which impact case study preparation was identified as a key priority for wider REF preparation. Information on the level of preparedness in each faculty was provided and it was noted that while good progress had been made, significant work still lay ahead. The quality of the proposed studies would be assessed at the next stock take.

12. Round table

- (a) Industrial action: TW provided an update, noting that communication with students had included responses to individual emails and a message to all students, as well as meetings with the Students' Union Officers. A meeting between UUK and UCU was to take place later in the day. Within the University, FVPs were in regular contact with HoDs and would share any concerns and queries with TW.
- (b) Planning round: UEB planning round meetings would commence on 6 March, and details of the approach to be taken had been circulated by GV and were intended to promote collective ownership of the process and outcomes. Any queries should be raised with GV.