



The  
University  
Of  
Sheffield.

Office UEB/2019/1911/01  
Of  
The President &  
Vice-Chancellor.

## Minutes University Executive Board

- Date:** 22 October 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 W Morgan (WM),  
Professor C Newman (CN), Professor D Petley (DP), Mr R Sykes (RS),  
Professor G Valentine (GV), Professor C Watkins (CW)
- In attendance:** Dr T Strike (TS), Mr A Storer (AS) (item 1); Dr R Birch (RHB) and Professor  
M Marshall (MM) (item 2); Mr I Wright (IW) (item 3)
- Apologies:**
- Secretary:** Mr D T Swinn (DTS)

### 1. Closed Minute and Paper

### 2. League Table Task & Finish Group discussions (RHB and MM in attendance for this item)

- 2.1 UEB received and noted an update and summary of the conclusions drawn from further work to review the University's performance against different indicators used by league tables. This had identified potential actions to optimise institutional data and enhance the University's performance, including tariff scores and Continuation. UEB also received a related presentation providing an overview of additional analysis of the University's relative and absolute performance in the Value Added measure used by the Guardian. Clarification was provided about (i) how league tables were informing UK and overseas student choices, and how this was changing over time; and (ii) the focus on the Guardian measures being due to them serving as a proxy for measuring performance in key areas.
- 2.2 UEB noted the importance of Value Added to both institution and department ranking and how this correlated with tariff and percentage of good degrees awarded.
- 2.3 The following points were noted in discussion:
- The use of good degree outcomes created a tension given regulatory attention on the issue of grade inflation.
  - The relative size of departments affected the overall impact of changes on institutional performance.
  - It was reported that a review of the University's degree classification system had been instigated in response to feedback from external examiners.
  - Action to improve performance in one measure could have potential positive and negative implications for performance against others.

- The positive impact of existing strategic initiatives on performance against various league table metrics, e.g. increasing recruitment of high quality students and using PLA as a means of improving assessment and feedback scores in the NSS.
- Rather than focusing on league table results, *per se*, Faculties and Departments should be supported to focus on strategic priorities and areas in which performance needed to improve, aligned with pan-institutional decisions.
- The introduction of SITS may require notification to HESA due changes in reporting that may result from improved internal data quality.

#### 2.4 **Actions:**

UEB endorsed the direction of travel proposed in the related paper, whereby:

- (a) Existing work on NSS results, entry standards and GTA contracts would continue, alongside additional action around Continuation and reputation.
- (b) Further work would take place to analyse how expenditure data was recorded and reported.

### 3. **Closed Minute and Paper**

#### 4. **International Staff Consultation – Migration Advisory Committee**

4.1 UEB considered the draft University response to the Migration Advisory Committee's (MAC) call for evidence on salary thresholds in the UK's future immigration system and a review of the points based immigration system. Specifically, this call related to the current £30k salary threshold for the Tier 2 (General) visa route, which UUK and others in the sector had argued was inappropriately and prohibitively high such that it was a barrier to staff recruitment. It was noted that the University employed both EU and non-EU staff in roles attracting a salary lower than £30k, and the draft response suggested three alternative approaches for consideration.

4.2 Subject to the following specific actions, UEB approved the draft response for submission to the MAC.

#### 4.3 **Actions:**

- (a) The response should list all roles that were currently graded such that the minimum salary fell below the £30k threshold.
- (b) The response to question 26 should be amended to remove the reference to age.
- (c) The response to Question 25 should state the lower salary (i.e. point one of the relevant grade on the University's pay scale).

### 5. **Building Naming Policy**

5.1 UEB received and approved proposed changes to the University's policy and process for naming buildings, following a review of current institutional practice and best practice across the sector. The revised policy sought to enable a more strategic and systematic approach to considering opportunities associated with naming University buildings.

### 6. **Report of the UEB Student Advisory Group: Student Numbers and Fees (Meeting held on 26 September)**

6.1 UEB received and approved the report, including departmental IELTS band equivalences that differed from the institutionally agreed framework. Clarification was provided about the balance of academic and professional membership on SAGSNF, and how this had improved connections with Faculties.

## **7. Report of the Information Management Group (Meeting held on 2 October)**

- 7.1 UEB received and approved the report, in particular a proposed approach to Data Protection Impact Assessment Screening (DPIAS). Also noted were progress in implementing the approach to retired staff email accounts that was previously agreed by UEB, and the completion of mandatory staff training, which was in the process of being rationalised from two to one online course.
- 7.2 With respect to DPIAS, the findings of a recent internal audit review had informed IMG's agreed approach, whereby it had focused initially on the most significant institutional IT projects that involved personal data. Related work was taking place to develop a procedure for undertaking DPIASs in other areas, including within proposals to IT Sub Group, through departmental managers, and through third party processing activities. Clarification was provided that the intended approach was risk-based and supported by a rolling training programme for departmental Information Champions and creation of an online Information Hub to support colleagues. The key outcome would be for colleagues to recognise relevant personal information and data and to consider the University's obligations around processing.

## **8. Ofcom Radio Licences**

- 8.1 UEB received and noted a briefing note on recent correspondence with Ofcom.

## **9. Round Table**

- (a) National Student Survey: WM reported that, in future, the NSS may be expanded to include all undergraduate students, with additional questions covering mental health and wellbeing, and the possible introduction of a PGT NSS. This was relevant to the future of the TEF, with the independent review expected to publish its report shortly. The University would respond to any consultation on proposals to change the NSS.
- (b) Office for Students Publications: UEB noted the publication of three guidance documents in the past week, covering monitoring and intervention, reportable events and value for money. With respect to the latter, the University would need to consider its future approach.
- (c) Office for Students correspondence: TS reported that the OfS had written to the University, and over 200 other HEIs, claiming that it had not paid subscription fees to the QAA. This was incorrect, and the University had responded accordingly.
- (d) Brexit: The Brexit Co-ordination Group would meet on 24 October. TS had recorded a webinar for UUK.
- (e) CESAER: MJH reported on a recent meeting, and the wider impact of Brexit.