



Minutes Meeting of the University Executive Board

Date: 23 April 2024

Present: Professor K Lamberts (KL), in the Chair (items 1-2 and 4),
Professor J Derrick (JD), Professor S Fitzmaurice (SF), Professor S Hartley (SH), Professor G Jewell, J Jones (JJ), Professor C O’Bradaigh (CO), R Sykes (RS), Professor M Vincent (MV) (in the Chair for items 3 and 5-10), Professor C Watkins (CW), I Wright (IW)

Secretary: D Swinn (DS)

In attendance: J Strachan (JS), T Wray (TW); (T Flaherty (TF) and L McCarthy (LM) (item 1); M Nuttall (MN) and V Jackson (VJ) (item 2); D Lodge (items 3 and 4); A Carlile, D Jones and C Boyle (item 4)

Apologies: Professor A Blom (AB)

1. Student Recruitment Update

(TF and LM in attendance for this item)

- 1.1 UEB received and noted an update on the latest student recruitment position for 2024 entry, including additional commentary on the figures and updates on a range of recruitment and marketing activities. Attention was drawn to the position across all student categories and the University's performance relative to the sector and competitors groups. It was also noted that the University’s Confirmation, Adjustment and Clearing Strategy would be presented to SAGSRP and UEB in May, followed by detailed scenario planning with individual Faculties and departments/Schools, including down to programme level. UEB would then have the opportunity to amend the CA&C Strategy if necessary.
- 1.2 In the context of ongoing but sector-wide challenges and uncertainties, particularly around overseas students, UEB discussed the importance of ongoing efforts to maximise opportunities from other overseas markets and noted that a paper on related matters would be presented SAGSRP and reported to UEB in due course. It was also reported that work was underway to analyse the applicant pool in different disciplines and programmes, which would inform the scenario planning and modelling. Members also noted that there were additional opportunities to consider the University's strategic approach to entry.

2. Closed Minute and Paper

3. Closed Minute and Paper

4. **REF Update**

(DL, AC, DJ and CB in attendance for this item)

- 4.1 UEB considered and endorsed an update on the University's preparations for the next REF exercise, including key elements of the REF and institutional impact preparedness. Particular attention was drawn to evaluation of the impact pipeline. Members also noted updates with respect to the ongoing discussions around People, Culture and Environment and the University's attendance at forthcoming workshops. It was reported that, while Research England remained committed to the current REF timetable, slippage in recruitment to assessment panels meant that a further one year delay was possible, which would increase risk and uncertainty over future QR funding.
- 4.2 With respect to supporting the REF preparations, clarification was provided about the nature of the University's sector-leading support for REF 2021, which a number of other institutions had sought to learn from, including around both the institutional impact statement and individual UoA statements.
- 4.3 In discussion of the additional support required, UEB noted that this was principally about having colleagues available to support academics to build and scale-up partnerships and collaborative activity. Clarification was also provided about measures planned and in progress to strengthen, and increase the realism and accuracy, of self-assessment

5. **New Schools Update**

- 5.1 UEB received and noted the latest progress update report and accompanying workstream milestones and major risks updates. It was reported that an additional staff Forum had taken place on 22 April with over 300 colleagues in attendance.

6. **USS Consultation**

- 6.1 UEB considered and approved the University's response to the USS Trustee consultation on changes to the Statement of Investment Principles, which would be considered by Council at its 29 April meeting. It was noted that the proposed amendments and draft response had been considered by the University's USS Working Group, informed by the independent commentary provided by AON due to the highly technical nature of the documentation provided by the USS Trustee.

7. **Closed Minute and Paper**

8. **Nursery Update**

- 8.1 UEB considered and approved a proposal to release funds for the refurbishment of 266-268 Fulwood Road, which housed the Nursery, and a high level business plan from the Students' Union for the financial operation of the Nursery.
- 8.2 During discussion attention was drawn to the financial implications of the purchase and related SU business plan, particularly the level of University subsidy required over the period; the wider operating context for nurseries in general, which was challenging. UEB recognised the importance of the University retaining a strong nursery offer as part of its attractiveness

9. **Student Recruitment - Proposed plans to mitigating actions**

9.1 This item was deferred.

10. **Round Table**

- (a) National Pay Negotiations: IW provided an update following the recent announcement that negotiations were continuing.
- (b) N8 PVC meeting: SH updated on a number of research and wider policy matters, several of which represented opportunities, as well as some challenges, for the University.
- (c) AMRC: GJ noted that the Treasury had recently hosted an event that was held at the AMRC.