



Minutes Meeting of the University Executive Board

Date:	22 October 2024
Present:	Professor R Mokaya (RM) in the Chair Professor R Blakeley (RB), Professor A Blom (AB), Professor J Derrick (JD), Professor S Fitzmaurice (SF), Professor S Hartley (SH), Professor G Jewell (GJ), J Jones (JJ), R Sykes (RS), Professor M Vincent (MV), I Wright (IW)
In attendance:	J Strachan (JS), T Wray (TW); A Carlile (AC) (item 1); T Flaherty (TF) and L McCarthy (LM) (item 1); R Needham (RN) (item 3); J Butler (JB) (item 4); R Gower (RG) (item 7); V Jackson (VJ) (item 8)
Apologies:	Professor K Lamberts (KL), Professor C O'Bradaigh (CO)
Secretary:	D Swinn (DS)

1. Student Number Scenario Modelling

(AC, TF and LM in attendance for this item)

- 1.1 UEB received and discussed a presentation about further student number scenario modelling, which had been undertaken following previous UEB feedback on initial forecast scenarios against 2025/26 and future targets. Attention was drawn to the forecasts for home and overseas undergraduate and postgraduate cohorts, potential risks and corresponding actions. Members noted the corresponding RAG ratings and the proposed mitigating actions to respond to and look to address this decline across each taught cohort.
- 1.2 Clarification was provided that discussions with Faculties about student recruitment and targets considered the wider external and overall institutional context, encompassing complex inter-related factors beyond purely financial implications, e.g. tariff, league tables and wider reputation.
- 1.3 With respect to overseas student recruitment, UEB noted the latest intelligence from across the sector and the University's peer group about their respective 2024 recruitment position and 2025 projections, as well as the actions being taken to maximise recruitment. It was also recognised that the relative success or otherwise of such actions in one institution would not necessarily be replicated in others and UEB discussed the risks to the University that similar actions would pose

2. Closed Minute and Paper

3. Telephony Project

(RN in attendance for this item)

- 3.1 UEB considered and approved a new University Telephony Policy, which proposed reducing overall telephony costs by allocating a dedicated phone number to individual members of staff only where this was required for their defined role. This change had been agreed by the One University Product Board as a sensible and reasonable step in the context of changing communication preferences. Having welcomed the proposals and the mitigation of identified risks, as set out in the paper, UEB also noted and approved the implementation of next steps, as set out in the related paper.

4. NSS 2024 Update

(JB in attendance for this item)

- 4.1 UEB considered and noted a report providing an overview and evaluation of the University's performance in the 2024 NSS Survey. It was noted that the NSS was a key measure used in the Teaching Excellence Framework and the University KPIs included the aim of being in the top three NSS ranking in the Russell Group for five key areas.
- 4.2 During a related presentation, attention was drawn to: the key institutional NSS headlines; continuing upward trends in positive feedback and comparisons with the sector; performance against the Russell Group overall and at subject level; institutional ranking trends over the last six years; an overview of individual School performance in the five key (KPI) measures. It was also noted that the positivity of responses had improved for all questions except one and was above the sector average for all but one question; Members noted the specific questions referred to. Attention was also drawn to the University having improved its position relative to the sector for the six questions about which concerns were raised in 2023 and individual department/School performance for each of them, as well as the availability of more granular information through the Tell US module survey results; continued focus on areas previously identified as priorities; and the need to recognise success whilst guarding against complacency, noting the significant fluctuations in the comparative performance of other institutions.

5. Financial Forecasts Update

- 5.1 UEB received and discussed a presentation which facilitated consideration of the financial issues to be addressed by the time Council met in November, provided an update on the latest financial position and the further adjustments to the forecasts required for Council Finance Committee's 14 November meeting, and the additional information and actions needed to inform the forecast targeted surplus position in time for Council's November meeting.
- 5.2 Clarification was provided over the cumulative shortfall over the forecast period, based on the latest figures and indications of future performance, and that consideration would be needed over the approach to communications about the financial position. It was also recognised that communications would need to reflect the declining size of the University's total student population and increases

in the size of various staff groups over the previous four years when student numbers had increased.

- 5.3 UEB discussed the approach to reward and recognition, including promotions, and agreed not to make any adjustments in this regard at present. However, there was a need for urgent action on areas such as discretionary spend to help address the shortfall in the immediate short-term, acknowledging that the scale of the savings required could not realistically be achieved without further significant targeted and structural action. UEB discussed the importance of considering and treating all areas of the University with parity in considering how, where and when any specific or structural action would be targeted, which would be informed by a strategic assessment of where income shortfalls fell, broader academic performance and institutional priorities and objectives.

6. Closed Minute and Paper

7. Closed Minute

8. Main headlines on financial policies

(VJ in attendance for this item)

- 8.1 UEB received and discussed a presentation in relation to financial policies for non-staff spend, to inform further discussion at the upcoming senior leaders' away day. Members discussed proposals relating to the overarching principles; additional reputational considerations; general departmental spend; procurement and other purchasing; training and development; conferences and travel, including international flights; and hospitality and entertaining.

9. Report of the UEB Student Recruitment and Population Sub-Group

- 9.1 UEB considered and approved the report, including amendments to the Group's terms of reference and membership and the Group's Scheme of Delegated Authority.

10. Report of the UEB Estates and Capital Sub-Group

- 10.1 UEB considered and approved the report.

11. 29 October Strategic UEB Discussion

- 11.1 UEB discussed and agreed the agenda for the 29 October strategic meeting, to which would be added additional discussion items relating to the financial position and OfS Annual Financial Return.

12. Round Table

- (a) Russell Group DVCs meeting: RM reported on a recent Russell Group DVC meeting, noting the University's positive trajectory in all league tables with the exception of the QS World Rankings.
- (b) Staff Survey: IW reported the initial headlines from the staff survey and would circulate an update to UEB following the meeting. Heads of School would also receive information, including a briefing pack and initial analysis of local results and the wider institutional context.

- (c) Group Litigation: JS provided an update on the latest developments and legal advice.
- (d) Defence and Security Framework: TW reported on plans to publish the framework and update senior leaders.