



Minutes Meeting of the University Executive Board

Date: 17 December 2024

Present: Professor K Lamberts (KL) in the Chair

Professor R Blakeley (RB), Professor J Derrick (JD), Professor S Fitzmaurice (SF), Professor S Hartley (SH), Professor G Jewell (GJ), J Jones (JJ), Professor R Mokaya (RM), Professor C O'Bradaigh (CO), R Sykes (RS), Professor M Vincent (MV), I Wright (IW)

In attendance: T Wray (TW); C Hamilton (CH), and L McCarthy (LM) (items 1-2), A Carlile (AC) (items 1-3); H Mather (HM) (item 3); V Jackson (VJ) (item 4); M Nuttall (MN) (items 4-5); Professor J Flint (JF) (item 5); Professor A Tiwari (AT) and S Rasul (SR) (item 6); L Wilson (LW) (item 7); L Goodacre (LG) and G Bradshaw-Wilson (GBW) (item 8); S Grocutt (SG) and N Hartley (NH) (item 9)

Apologies: Professor A Blom (AB), J Strachan (JS)

Secretary: D Swinn (DS)

1. Student Recruitment Update

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

- 1.1 UEB noted and discussed the latest admissions figures and commentary for 2025 entry, with figures as at 1 December 2024, and noted updates on the home and international recruitment events and marketing activities. Members also received a verbal update on the most up to date admissions position and recent recruitment and marketing events.
- 1.2 During discussion, UEB discussed the measures that the University was considering and might consider, as well as those being taken by other institutions. Maintaining academic quality and safeguarding the student experience, whilst responding to increased competition and evolving market demands, was essential. English language requirements were also important and further consideration was needed as to the most effective language provision to support overseas students, potentially through sector bodies, taking into account opportunities around supporting technology, including AI. It was also noted that there remained high numbers of prospective students and so it was vital that colleagues made every effort to maximise recruitment from the available pool.

2. Student Intake Target Changes and Financial Impact

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

- 2.1 UEB considered a paper proposing new student recruitment intake targets for 2025-26 to 2029-30, following a refresh of student population objectives and review of intake targets based on earlier UEB discussion and consideration by the UEB Student Recruitment and Population Sub-Group. Members also noted a summary of the impact of changes to the student intake targets on the financial forecasts and a series of planned next steps. Members also welcomed plans to model a more negative scenario, which would support further contingency planning, as a prudent and appropriate measure.
- 2.2 Clarification was provided over the revised PGR targets. The University was rightly focused on attracting high quality applicants rather than high numbers.
- 2.3 UEB discussed the impact of the revised student number forecasts on the University's plans to move out of deficit within four years under the financial forecasts returned to the OfS, with the significant further shortfall necessitating additional mitigating actions. It was noted that work to build 2025/26 budgets would need to commence shortly and indicative budgets would be shared before Christmas, based on the OfS forecasts.
- 2.4 UEB recognised the need to undertake further detailed planning. This would require prioritisation.
- 2.5 UEB acknowledged that all the evidence supported changes to future student number targets as there would be no benefit in agreeing unrealistic targets that were unlikely to be achievable. Agreeing a set of numbers to inform the financial forecasts and budgets and planning a further negative scenario would also support future going concern assessments, as well as avoiding the need to review and revise numbers on a frequent basis whilst also supporting compliance with bank covenants and USS metrics.
- 2.6 UEB approved the revised student intake targets and related next steps, as set out in the related paper.

3. Closed Minute and Paper

4. Closed Minute and Paper

5. Closed Minute and Paper

6. University Consultancy Policy

(AT and SR in attendance for this item)

- 6.1 UEB considered a proposed revised University Consultancy Policy and related recommendations in three key areas. It was noted that this work followed previous reports that had identified weaknesses in institutional support for consultancy, an initial options analysis in January 2024 and subsequent discussion with and input from senior research leaders. The revised policy drew together measures to clarify

processes and reduce consultancy-related risks, both to the University and individual academics, but also represented an opportunity to increase income from consultancy, which did not compare favourably to the University's peer group at present.

- 6.2 Clarification was provided over the current approach to private consultancy, which carried the most significant risks, and related terms and conditions of employment for academic staff and applicable provisions in the Financial Regulations. In particular, UEB considered the day rates that should be charged for consultancy, the administration charge to be applied, and whether to allow consultancy income to carry over between financial years. With respect to the latter, it was noted that such an approach was not ideal from a financial management perspective but that offering greater flexibility to colleagues was potentially of great benefit. However, further evaluation was required about what was permissible under the applicable accounting rules before a final decision could be taken.
- 6.3 Subject to the further actions noted, UEB approved the policy and agreed that private consultancy would be strongly discouraged and subject to particular requirements when it was undertaken. UEB also approved the following:
 - 6.3.1 The minimum day rates as set out in the related paper and policy.
 - 6.3.2 An increase in the administration charge on consultancy day rates from a historically low level to one in line with sector norms, as set out in the paper.
 - 6.3.3 In principle, the carry forward of consultancy income between financial years, for up to 3-4 years, subject to further analysis by the Department of Finance and development of a workable approach.

7. Listening Events

(LW in attendance for this item)

- 7.1 Following previous UEB discussion, Members considered proposals for a revised approach to institutional-staff listening events, which had been developed with advice from an external facilitator and mediator. It was noted that the University had previously committed to offering events such as this and that they would be beneficial in providing a safe space for colleagues to discuss issues that were likely to be inherently highly complex, divisive or sensitive in a constructive and positive manner.
- 7.2 UEB discussed the importance of ensuring that anyone interested in attending these events had an equal opportunity to do so, whilst facilitating an attendance that was as balanced and representative of the University community as possible. It was also recognised that preparing and developing these events was resource intensive and that there was significant value in engaging an external facilitator for the initial sessions, given the specialist nature of the role.
- 7.3 UEB approved the revised approach to listening events, as set out in detail in the related paper and including the use of an external mediator, and noted the series of next steps to implement this approach.

8. Nursery Project

(LG and GBW in attendance for this item)

- 8.1 Further to previous UEB discussion and agreement, UEB considered an update and related proposals in relation to the timing of the Nursery project, following subsequent investigatory work and consideration of alternative options.
- 8.2 During discussion, UEB recognised the need for urgent action to the property and noted the principal risk of delays.
- 8.3 UEB noted and approved the recommendations set out in the related paper.

9. Closed Minute and Paper

10. Closed Minute

11. Round Table

- (a) Industrial Relations: IW reported the latest communications from UCU and UCU's decision to ballot at national level for action over the 2024 national pay agreement.
- (b) Protests: GJ reported on recent protest activity, which had attracted only 15 attendees and passed without incident, and thanked Security Services for their support in preparing for and managing this.
- (c) Financial Updates: JJ reported on recent discussions with lenders and the University's credit ratings agency.