



The  
University  
Of  
Sheffield.

Office UEB/2017/2504/01  
Of The  
President &  
Vice-Chancellor.

## **Minutes University Executive Board**

**Date:** 28 March 2017

**Present:** Professor S West (SW) (in the Chair),  
Professor N Clarke (NC), Mrs H J Dingle (HJD),  
Mr A Dodman (AD), Professor M J Hounslow (MJH),  
Professor J Labbe (JL), Professor W Morgan (WM),  
Professor D Petley (DP), Mr R Rabone (RR),  
Professor G Valentine (GV)

**In attendance:** Ms R Birch (RHB) (item 2); Mr S Thompson, Ms C Vernon (CV) and Ms T Wray (TW) (item 5)

**Apologies:** Professor Sir Keith Burnett (KB),  
Professor Dame Pamela J Shaw (PJS), Dr A West (AW);

**Secretary:** Mr D T Swinn (DTS)

### **1. Minutes of the meeting held on 14 March 2017** (UEB/2017/0328/001)

The Minutes of the meeting held on 14 March 2017 were approved as an accurate record, subject to one amendment to paragraph 2.3(b) (Faculty of Arts & Humanities) to clarify that the Faculty was not planning to review dual degrees but that the working group may link to the review of SLC.

### **2. Overview of planning submission for Education, Research & Innovation and Professional Services** (UEB/2017/2803/02)

(Rhiannon Birch in attendance for this item)

2.1 UEB received a preliminary draft outline of the outcomes and proposed actions arising from the Education, Research & Innovation and Professional Services plans considered as part of the 2016-17 planning cycle, together with the full narrative template for each area. In due course UEB would receive a comprehensive Planning Outcomes and Actions paper based on this and previous discussions about faculty plans. The main outcomes and actions identified were noted and additional comments were raised as follows:

#### **2.2 Education:**

(a) With respect to increasing the emphasis on work at programme level, WM clarified that when pilot initiatives concluded at the end of 2016/17, open fora would be held for all colleagues to share learning and identify good practice before being rolled-out in all departments in 2017/18. The intended model would include dedicated faculty contacts and departmental support. The purpose of this work was to encourage innovation rather than reviewing courses, although the latter may be a consequence of the approach.

- (b) In welcoming plans to support staff development, UEB recognised that, in order to be effective, it should target individuals, programmes and departments most in need.
- (c) Work on student recruitment through the reconstituted Student Numbers and Fees Advisory Group, which held its first meeting on 27 March, and enhancement activity around student welfare should be reflected in the narrative.
- (d) After all 2016/17 Achieve More Level 2 projects had concluded, it would be timely to evaluate the impact and effectiveness of Achieve More, as a whole, against the objectives set out when the scheme was originally agreed, including financial and opportunity costs. HJD would provide information to support this analysis and faculties would be engaged in the process. In due course UEB would receive a paper.

### 2.3 Research & Innovation:

- (a) UEB welcomed plans to raise ambition around the quality of research outputs by challenging colleagues to aspire to at least one 4\* publication. It was recognised that the primary objective was to increase research quality not successful performance in the REF, which should result from increasing the volume of high quality outputs institutionally. It was reasonable to expect that academic staff in a research intensive university produce high quality, excellent research, although in considering workloads it was important to balance this with the need to deliver excellent learning and teaching informed by that research. The academic pathways project could support this work.
- (b) With respect to identifying areas of research for particular focus, it was important to consider opportunities that were yet to be realised or with unfulfilled potential, not just those that were already excellent and/or world-leading.
- (c) Clarification was provided that the allocation of HEIF funding was planned to be made more rigorous, rather than formulaic, by evaluating the performance of teams in receipt of funding and their achievements against expectations and objectives.
- (d) It was confirmed that the current bid for AHRC DTP funding was by the White Rose consortium, with no additional partners.

It was reported that WM and DP would be working together to identify areas of Education and Research & Innovation that overlapped or were, or could be, mutually supportive. This included both communications with staff and students but also in areas of opportunities, e.g. PG provision.

### 2.4 Professional Services:

- (a) It was noted that a key role for the Director of Academic Services would be to enhance the culture and responsiveness of Professional Services in responding to faculties' needs, in a 'business partnership' model. These issues had been prominent in the recent reviews of three professional services departments, overseen by SDG. The importance of this should be reflected in the narrative and respective Professional Services should be encouraged to articulate how they achieved it.
- (b) Faculties would welcome a stronger sense of relevant professional services departments' understanding of and interest in the need to support faculties in generating income.
- (c) UEB noted the importance of fostering a strong sense of collegiality and willingness to overcome operational barriers to new and innovative activities, e.g. in IT systems and processes.

### **3. Industrial Strategy consultation: draft response**

(UEB/2017/2803/03)

(Rhiannon Birch in attendance for this item)

UEB considered the draft University response to the Government's consultation on the *Building our Industrial Strategy* Green Paper, for final submission by 17 April. The draft concentrated on core institutional messages to inform the development of policy. It highlighted the need to reflect the importance of investment in energy and services, and emphasised the limited attention the Green Paper afforded to creative and cultural industries, which represented a sizable proportion of the UK economy – and was a vital element of institutional and broader SCR strategy.

Comments and suggestions included:

- Enhance references to the AMRC as an exemplar by reflecting the importance of a global outlook through the establishment of new centres in areas with an existing industrial base that needed the particular skills development, expertise and translational research such centres could support. It was also important to note the number of graduates of academic engineering programmes who obtained high skilled jobs in industry.
- Stress the importance and potential contribution of science disciplines to industry, which was currently lacking from the Green Paper and appeared not be acknowledged by policy-makers.
- Comments about service industries should include areas such as healthcare. The Sheffield 'City of Makers' brand was also relevant.
- The local computer gaming industry employed large numbers of people with different skills, including artists, engineers and scientists. It was reported that regional digital employers were interested in working with the University to develop apprenticeship standards for the industry.
- Strengthen points relating to cultural vibrancy by demonstrating the impact of a wider range of academic activity on the city and SCR.
- Highlight the significance of a strong transport infrastructure, especially air and rail, to industrial and economic success, e.g. its role in helping to attract investment.

### **4. Strategic Partnerships**

UEB discussed the extent and effectiveness of the University's strategic partnerships, which the President & Vice-Chancellor was actively considering. Discussions focused on how to support and exploit opportunities for new corporate level partnerships, how these may be defined, identifying any gaps in the current portfolio, effectiveness of current arrangements and any enhancements required.

UEB discussed examples of which of its existing partnership arrangements may be regarded as strategic at corporate level. This could depend on factors including the size of the risk or opportunity and relevance to more than one faculty. The extent to which key academic partnerships were identified and fostered was vital and it was suggested that the University should seek to identify overseas universities of comparable quality with which collaboration would be mutually beneficial.

It was noted that strategic partnerships should be established and developed to achieve clear objectives such as research activity (particularly with industry), student recruitment and mobility, influencing policy, and developing the University's global networks and international presence. The University needed to be bolder in celebrating and articulating its excellence, capabilities and ambition. The benefit of an established UEB-lead supported by dedicated resource was noted. More generally, UEB noted that creative thinking would be required in some circumstances to overcome

operational barriers to partnership working.

It was noted that consideration was being given to adopting a corporate relationship management system (CRM) to facilitate tracking of relevant information and data to support the shared understanding of the University's relationship with partners.

## **5. Student Recruitment and Marketing – presentation**

(Tracy Wray, Carrie Vernon and Steve Thompson in attendance for this item)

UEB received a presentation about initiatives to enhance the University's marketing and promotion to prospective students throughout the recruitment cycle, and other key stakeholders, following consultation and feedback from colleagues across the University. Attention was drawn to key marketing messages focusing on teaching excellence and uniqueness, including the results of the 2017 THE student experience survey, greater celebration of Russell Group membership, graduate employability, overall student experience, and raising awareness of the benefits of Sheffield as a city. In particular, UEB noted campaigns around PGT and PGR scholarships; a city destination guide for use in a range of student recruitment activities that could also support staff recruitment; support for departments through a Recruitment Strategy Group; and digital and website enhancements, including greater data gathering and analytical capabilities.

The following points were noted in discussion:

- The 'Transform' promotion may be better suited to attracting and engaging high quality applicants at Clearing and Adjustment than at the start of the cycle.
- The University needed to maximise the use of all UCAS and other recruitment-related data available to help inform the work of Corporate Communications. Student Numbers and Fees Advisory Group was actively considering the matter.
- Work was underway to establish separate internally and externally-facing web pages, and achieve greater consistency in presentation and navigability across faculty and departmental pages.
- Efforts to increase the University's visibility and presence within schools could be supported using alumni of the School of Education
- Although market intelligence indicated that the print prospectus was still important for potential applicants, the need to produce it 18 months in advance was challenging for departments who wanted to revise their entry requirements. The importance of complying with CMA guidance was also noted. It was suggested that the Student Numbers and Fees Advisory Group might usefully consider this issue, taking into account the progress of digital enhancement initiatives.
- UEB agreed that the web pages of all departments should feature prominently the results of the THE student experience survey, and updates could be made centrally. Departments would be informed.
- A small number of departments would be identified for targeted support, before this was introduced in all departments in due course. WM would circulate initial suggestions.

## **6. Report of the Risk Review Group (Meeting held on 8 March)**

(UEB/2017/2803/04)

UEB approved the Report, including the first three faculty updates, which supported connectivity with corporate level risks and which in future would seek to articulate links to the planning round; and the third iteration of the 2016/17 Corporate Risk Register. With respect to the latter it was noted that the direction of travel had reduced for two risks, one of which also had a reduced residual exposure to reflect the current position.

RR expressed his appreciation for colleagues in SPG for their work in enabling a comprehensive view of how actions at operational level affected corporate risks.

## **7. Report of the Estates & Capital Sub-Group (Meeting held on 13 March)**

(UEB/2017/2803/05)

UEB approved the Report and endorsed recommendations relating to the following capital projects:

- University maintenance report, containing financial information that would be included within the University's 2017 outturn and financial forecasting process;
- Change of scope of the New Energy Centre and consequent reduction in budget;
- Refurbishment of 15-27A Endcliffe Avenue;
- Hicks Cycle Hub and EFM Campus West maintenance team facility;
- Minalloy House (third floor refurbishment);
- Modular Village computer rooms;
- Digital MINE@Sheffield;
- Royce Discovery Centre;
- University policy on Naming Buildings.

## **8. Report of the Public Value Sub-Group (Meeting held on 13 March)**

(UEB/2017/2803/06)

UEB received and approved the Report.

## **9. Round table**

- (a) Student Recruitment: WM reported that an additional Open Day for offer-holders would take place on 29 April. An email had been sent to HoDs and further support from faculties would be welcomed.
- (b) NSS: WM reported that overall response rate remained low, at 41%, with only ten days of term time. Significant effort would be required to ensure that the University reached the necessary 50% threshold but it was noted that certain departments were highly unlikely to reach this individually given the strength of the boycott locally. The University was an outlier in the sector, with the student boycott attracting significantly less support in other institutions. Any adverse consequences on the University's final results would require consideration of internal and external communications.
- (c) Faculty of Arts & Humanities: Two appointments were reported to the positions of Faculty Director of Impact and Engagement and the Faculty's PG lead.
- (d) Financial Health of the Sector: RR would circulate a recent briefing note on HEFCE's report on the Financial Health of the sector based on analysis of universities' 2015-16 financial statements.
- (e) Faculty of Engineering: MJH reported the appointment of an acting Faculty Director of Operations.
- (f) Faculty of Social Sciences: GV reported a prestigious ERC Advanced Investigator award, short-listing for an ERC Starting Grant, and an additional one-year ESRC bridging funding to the Impact Accelerator Award.

- (g) SDF: HJD reported that costs allocated to the Faculty of Science in relation to the Grantham Centre would be net of costs attributable to the small number of students registered in other faculties.
- (h) University Secretary: AD reported that Council Nominations Committee would recommend the appointment of Tony Strike, Director of Strategy, Planning and Change as University Secretary with effect from 1 July. The impact on SPG was under consideration, including delegation of certain functions, and transitional arrangements would be reviewed after six months. The appointment would be announced to staff on 29 March.