

BOARD OF GOVERNORS

Minutes

Of the Board of Governors meeting held on Monday, 29 January and Tuesday, 30 January 2024 at the Richmond Hill Hotel, 144-150 Richmond Hill, TW10 6RW

Present:

Mr Derek Hicks (Independent Governor, Chair of the Board of Governors)
Ms Kim Ansell (Independent Governor)
Ms Aprileen Alexander (Independent Governor)
Ms Sandra Botterell (Independent Governor)
Ms Shirley Cameron (Independent Governor)
Ms Tina Coates (Independent Governor)
Mr James Edmunds (Academic Board Representative)
Mr Steve Fowler (Independent Governor)
Ms Alison Griffin (Staff Governor)
Professor Heather Loveday (Professoriate Representative)
Professor Peter John CBE (President and Vice-Chancellor)
Ms Maisie Kelly (SU President)
Mr Jonathan Lawrence (Independent Governor)
Dr Christopher McLaverty (Independent Governor)
Ms Andrea Miller (Independent Governor)
Ms Kerry O'Callaghan (Independent Governor)
Ms Helena Peacock (Independent Governor)
Mr Kiran Virdee (Independent Governor) (Tuesday, 30 January 2024)
Mr Stuart Wright (Independent Governor)

In attendance:

Mr Yash Arora (SU VP Activities and student representative)
Mr James Aston (Partner, National Head of Education, BDO) (Monday, 29 January)
Mr Adrian Ellison (APVC, Chief Information Officer and Director of Digital Futures)
Mr Patrick Fuller (Group Chief Financial Officer)
Dr Suresh Gamlath (PVC, Business Development)
Mr Joshua Heming (University Secretary)
Mr Neil Henderson (Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development)
Ms Coral Mason (Assistant Clerk to the Board)
Ms Sara Raybould (Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Education and Student Experience)
Dr Kostas Tzortzis (PVC Strategy, Performance and Analytics)
Ms Claire Willitts (Director of Property Services)
Professor Anthony Woodman (Provost and Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor)

1. Apologies for absence, announcements and declarations of interest

- 1.1 There were no declarations of interest.
- 1.2 The Chair of the Board opened the away day outlining the sessions for Monday, 29 January and Tuesday, 30 January, 2024. The overarching theme was to consider how the Board of Governors could best support the success of the University's Strategic Plan, *Impact 2028*, drawing on the current and future climate and how the Board had supported the University in meeting the objectives in *Achievement 2023*. Members noted that *Impact 2028* was ambitious and it was possible not all objectives would be delivered, particularly due to the uncertain sector landscape.
- 1.3 Independent Governors were reminded of the private session on Tuesday, 30 January 2024 at 9am which would provide an opportunity for members to express their requests for agenda items for future meetings.

2. Sector Risks and Good Governance (Presentation)

- 2.1 The Chair of the Board welcomed Mr James Aston, Partner, National Head of Education, BDO.
- 2.2 Mr Aston opened the session providing details on his background and experience in the higher education sector and his association with UWL dating over twenty years, 10 years as the BDO Audit Partner.
- 1.1 2.3 As an Audit Partner, UWL, formerly known as TVU, was on the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) at risk register which required elevated financial reporting. **Some references in this section have been redacted.** The University closed courses that were losing money and made voluntary and compulsory redundancies. Finally, the University changed its name to the University of West London and refreshed membership of the Board of Governors. A clear division of the role of the Board and the University Executive was established leading to a continued period of good governance.
- 2.4 The sector was facing a wide range of financial concerns including staff costs, inflation, utilities expenditure and self-financing and maintenance of capital works projects. HEIs were over relying on international student recruitment to subsidise home students as the unit of resource had been frozen at £9,250. Press stories stating some HEIs were reducing tariffs for international students had created poor publicity for the sector as a whole. It was difficult to appreciate the concerns across the sector as it was likely many HEIs were not being explicit about the true extent of their financial difficulties. Many Russell Group HEIs refused to implement cuts including redundancies.
- 2.5 The current sector landscape was difficult but UWL had established itself as a leading modern university and, due to practices implemented while on the risk register, was currently weathering the storm. As the election loomed both major parties had indicated there would be no additional funding for the sector, but it was clear the current funding system was unsustainable.

- 2.6 Some HEIs were slow to adapt to the pastoral needs of students including those whose education had been online for a number of years due to the pandemic.
- 2.7 Although there had been an upturn in the 18-year old demographic there had been a small fall in the numbers going to university. Many were opting for alternatives to studying full-time opting for degree or workplace apprenticeships instead.
- 2.8 There had been an over-reliance on international student recruitment, but other countries were becoming more attractive to international students than the UK. The UK Visa and Immigration (UKVI) service restricted student numbers and if the rules were not strictly adhered to, it was likely a HEI would have their license suspended.
- 2.9 Research funding had been impacted by Brexit, but the UK had now been accepted back in the EU Horizon 2020 funding programme. There would be a funding lag which would impact on research income if the UK government did not make up the shortfall. Many researchers had left the UK and it was increasingly difficult to maintain a full research team.
- 2.10 As many HEIs were facing a funding deficit they were looking at ways to increase student numbers. Russell Group HEIs may increase the number of non-traditional students which would impact on those HEIs that had historically accepted a more diverse intake. It was agreed that competition would intensify.
- 2.11 The government had introduced the Lifelong Learning Entitlement (LLE) to allow for a more flexible learning route. Students would be allowed to carry modules from a number of HEIs, but this would create difficulties for universities particularly around long term funding and engaging with a transient cohort. The government had made it clear that there would be no additional funding for LLE students.
- 2.12 Capital funding had been virtually withdrawn by the government and HEIs were expected to fund their own property development and maintenance. A healthy surplus was the only way HEIs could maintain their estates.
- 2.13 The recent Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) results indicated no HEI had a status of 'requires improvement'.
- 2.14 A House of Lords report in September 2023 warned that the OfS was 'failing to meet the needs of students and was not trusted by many of the providers it regulates'.
- 2.15 If a Labour government was elected in Autumn 2024 it was suggested they may abolish the OfS and create a different regulator.
- 2.16 The BDO Partner turned his attention to the future of the sector and questioned whether a government would allow a HEI to fail. He highlighted the cases of three private providers and colleges that had collapsed. The Education Act of 2017 was referenced but it was noted that student funds were not protected, and creditors would be given preference.
- 2.17 The Chair of the Board informed members that UWL was in a good financial position but should not be complacent as the sector constantly faced new risks. Although known risks can be mitigated against, it was impossible to mitigate against the

unknown and it was likely a series of risks could present at the same time. Many HEIs in financial difficulty were currently selling parts of their estate with those in London doing particularly well but if their costs were not being reduced then the problem would reappear quickly.

- 2.18 There were six HEIs in serious financial difficulty with at least another ten facing financial uncertainty. They were not being realistic and had overpredicted student numbers, failed to close courses that did not recruit sufficient numbers, make redundancies and make a surplus for a number of years. It was predicted these HEIs would fail within ten years.
- 2.19 Members were reminded that UWL was making an approximately 8-9% surplus but the VCE remained cautious in how funds were utilised. UWL had to remain fit for purpose and ensure course offerings were deliverable and were what students and employers wanted. Courses should help prepare students for the jobs of the future.
- 2.20 Members discussed the University's Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) responsibilities noting that the sector may be unable to fulfil all of its aspirations because of financial constraints but ESG should be part of their long-term plan for all and cannot be ignored. It was agreed that ESG was difficult to manage without expertise on the Board and Executive Teams but ESG should form a part of all HEIs' strategic missions.
- 2.21 If a HEI failed there could be long-term financial repercussions across the sector. The DfE would be required to take on the financial liabilities resulting in a loss of autonomy, but it could also lead to banks being reluctant to make loans across the sector as the risk would be seen to be too high.
- 2.22 Members agreed the basis for effective governance was openness and if the Board received the correct information they would be able to ask the right questions.
- 2.23 The Board of Governors thanked Mr Aston and **NOTED** the presentation.

3. Feltham Hub (Presentation)

- 3.1 The Vice-Chancellor provided an overview of the proposed regeneration of Feltham being led by the local MP Seema Malhotra. The proposal included a range of improvements for the community but focussed in part on addressing a gap in HE provision as Feltham had one of the lowest HE participation rates in the country.
- 3.2 Feltham is close to Heathrow and the University is the closest HEI to both. The University has a strong sense of civic duty and a long history of successful widening participation initiatives that blended with the proposal.
- 3.3 Professor Graeme Atherton had received funding to conduct research into the economic demand for higher education provision and Dr Matt Snowden was formulating curriculum proposals aligned to the needs of the area.
- 3.4 **Some references in this section have been redacted.**

- 3.5 If the proposal was progressed then Hounslow Council could apply for Regional Development Funds from central government although it was acknowledged it was often difficult to receive funding of this kind in London. The regeneration process was in the very early stages and whilst the proposals were taking shape UWL would not commit to anything.
- 3.6 Research indicated that 18-year olds living in Feltham do well at GCSE and A Levels but do not progress to higher education for a number of reasons. There was no history of adults moving into higher education in the family, fear of debt, low ambition and many do not want to live away from home. Living close to Heathrow airport allowed many to secure work easily, some may opt for the apprenticeship route, but it was clear there was a need to provide local higher education provision. In addition, Hounslow Council want to grow and retain a highly, educated, skilled workforce in the area.
- 3.7 The area had previously been predominately white, working class but was now ethnically diverse.
- 3.8 A discussion took place on the merits of the University being involved with the regeneration. It was noted that a recent study suggested there would be a drop in student numbers in London and UWL would need to consider where its pipeline of students would be from. Building interest in HE study in Feltham could help address this anticipated drop and could be less risky than seeking to recruit more students from outside of London to cover any shortfall. Changes to course offerings could also help the University deal with changing recruitment trends., but. In addition, a review of the course portfolio and course content would be needed. It was inevitable that some courses would close. If UWL extended its recruitment reach beyond London it could be high risk and the Feltham regeneration could offer a balance to that risk.
- 3.9 The political landscape was uncertain, but it was likely the MP, Seema Malhotra, would retain her seat and so the regeneration plans would be progressed in the next parliament.
- 3.10 While Governors agreed the proposal aligned with UWL's social mission, concerns remained about costs and the opportunity cost. If the University committed to the proposal and it moved to the next stage then resources would need to be allocated. The Board queried if resources were moved to the Feltham development, what other activities would cease? Would the resource allocated be at the expense of something else? The Vice-Chancellor informed members that it was difficult to determine the risk at this stage, but it was hoped any decision taken would be informed by the research undertaken by Professor Atherton. Dr Matt Snowden was currently Chair of the Hounslow Creative Enterprise Zone and was aware of needs and requirements for higher education in the area.
- 3.11 Members queried whether the University could bring on another HEI in the locality, but this would increase the risk as many were experiencing financial difficulties.
- 3.12 Members agreed the item should be considered at a Board meeting when the research by Professor Atherton had been completed.

Action: Vice-Chancellor/University Secretary

3.13 The Board of Governors **NOTED** the presentation.

4. *Impact 2028 – Update on the Strategic Plan (Presentation)*

4.1 The Vice-Chancellor referred members to the hard copy of the strategic plan which provided an overview of the University's long-term direction which included recalibrating the curriculum, through a better balance of SHAPE and STEM but also looking at ways to fuse elements of the creative arts with science and engineering.

4.2 Members were informed that the plan had been shared with all staff who had been mainly supportive of the content. There was an increased emphasis on research activity as research drove high quality teaching.

4.3 A discussion took place on the University culture and the Vice-Chancellor reminded members of the discussion that took place at the Board meeting on 12 October 2021 and agreed to send the paper on *Cracking the cultural code: wise and thoughtful governance at UWL* to members.

Action: University Secretary

4.4 The Board of Governors **NOTED** the presentation.

Tuesday, 30 January 2024

1. *Governance over the next 10 years – issues, challenges and first thoughts. (Presentation)*

1.1 The agenda item was attended by Independent and University Governors only.

1.2 The Chair of the Board opened the session exploring the changing challenges the Board may face over the next five years and to help identify some of the key characteristics that current and new Governor would need to exhibit.

1.3 Members were reminded of UWL's history over the past 10+ years transforming from an institution that was in real danger of failing to one that was in a strong financial position, positive recruitment and excellent to good performance across a wide range of sector metrics.

1.4 The Board had transformed from a crisis Board to one making conscious decisions about strategic directions. The transformation was primarily due to the exceptionally strong leadership of the Vice-Chancellor and the Vice-Chancellor's Executive.

1.5 The University faced new challenges, driven by *Impact 2028*, including the development of the School of Medicine to the continuation of UWL's access mission whilst also pushing to build its reputation through league tables.

1.6 A discussion took place on the next recruitment drive for Independent Governors and the characteristics required. Members overwhelmingly agreed new appointments should have an understanding and commitment to the University's mission.

1.7 Members agreed on a number of key points:

- a) A more proactive approach to succession for Board members and VCE members should be developed,
- b) VCE to continue to be open and transparent in providing updates and horizon scanning to the Board and when a new Vice-Chancellor and VCE members are appointed, this should continue,
- c) Board members would like to identify and help select new Board members,
- d) Board members appreciated the positive exchange of information about long term strategies but would like more information on how investment decisions were made when looking at new opportunities,
Action: Vice-Chancellor/Group Chief Financial Officer
- e) Members requested further information on regulatory regimes,
Action: University Secretary
- f) Members requested further information on the rationale and benefits of the University research activity,
Action: University Secretary
- g) To develop a narrative that captures the good performance of the University that can be used by Board members in advocacy and representational situations, and
Action: University Secretary
- h) To schedule regular Independent Governor sessions at least twice a year. The position of Staff Governors would be confirmed.
Action: University Secretary

1.8 The Board of Governors **NOTED** the update.

2. Move from SHAPE to STEM (Presentation)

2.1 The Provost and Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor and the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education and Student Experience) opened the presentation by explaining what the acronyms meant:

- SHAPE – Social Sciences, Humanities, Arts for the People and the Economy
- STEM – Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
- STEAM – Science, Technology, Engineering, the Arts and Mathematics

2.2 The University was rebalancing its curriculum to ensure there was a healthy balance of SHAPE and STEM subjects and, where possible, blending subject areas together to ensure students received a rich, broad learning experience that allowed them to move into jobs where they could enhance the working environment.

2.3 The evolution of STEM has taken over 30 years as industries had been pushing for schools and HEIs to advocate for the subjects in areas where there was a skills shortage. SHAPE subjects had started to feel the effects of this drive as there had been a steady decrease in student numbers to the arts and humanities.

2.4 Whilst UWL restructured the curriculum the main focus would be to blend arts and humanities with science and technology. This was already happening but not always by design.

2.5 Members were provided with details of the decline in SHAPE numbers and an increase in STEM numbers at UWL and nationally. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education and Student Experience) informed members that the only way funding for SHAPE could continue was to invest in STEM, both cannot exist in isolation and the only way for both to exist was in an interdisciplinary form. As the 'Careers University' UWL needed to plan for the future job market. Recruitment trends indicated a growth in student numbers into STEM subjects and a decline in SHAPE numbers. The University could counteract the decline in SHAPE numbers by blending science and technology into the curriculum.

2.6 Members requested a tour of SMR and Paragon House to update their knowledge of the facilities for students.

Action: University Secretary

2.7 Central government funding was now directed to STEM subject areas and for the University to maintain a level of funding from the government it was essential to ensure courses provided a STEM focus. The University had been investing in expanding STEM facilities with an increase in science laboratories, the opening of the School of Medicine, the opening of the School of Biomedical Sciences and the establishment of the Faringdon Centre (funding provided by Lord Charles Faringdon).

2.8 Data provided by the Institute for Student Employer Recruitment provided details on subjects where the job market had skills gaps which would continue to grow if HEIs did not invest in curricula based on these needs.

2.9 The Provost and Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor provided an overview of how Schools/Colleges were already developing their curriculums already and how this would benefit employers and students. There would be a constant rebalancing as the world of work was constantly changing and the University would have to remain nimble to meet the future needs of students and employers.

2.10 Members agreed that demand pushes change and the University would not maintain its presence as a leading modern university without constantly adapting. HEIs were facing growing competition from private providers who appeared to be able to pump money into areas of growth.

2.11 Members further agreed that UWL had to ensure graduates were ready for the world of work and maintaining an overview of graduate progression would provide details on whether the investment was a success.

2.12 The Provost and Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor confirmed funding would be evenly balanced and it was not simply an either/or option as investment would continue into SHAPE subject areas.

2.13 Members were assured that UWL would remain a champion of widening participation, would encourage students to reach their potential in all disciplines and encourage students to reappraise their own skills base and look beyond the limitations they may have placed upon themselves.

2.14 The changing course portfolio should be explicit in what it was offering as any blurring could confuse students and employers, but members noted that UWL offered many

courses that already fused STEM and SHAPE, so the University was well versed in detailing course outcomes.

- 2.15 The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Business Development) informed members that most of the start-ups emerging from the Westmont Hub were focused on STEM developments.
- 2.16 The Vice-Chancellor informed members that the best results in the Research Excellence Framework (REF) were in the London College of Music (LCM) and the London School of Film, Media and Design (LSFMD) with the technical parts in LCM scoring the highest.
- 2.17 The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education and Student Experience) reconfirmed the University was rebalancing the funding model and was not removing funding from SHAPE areas. Those leading SHAPE subject areas were only beginning to act with a national collective voice to ensure funding was not completely depleted.
- 2.18 The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education and Student Experience) confirmed the University had an active outreach department heavily involved at local school level and were ensuring parents were provided with details on SHAPE subject areas and how a career in these areas would benefit them.
- 2.19 The rebalancing of the curriculum would also support the University drive to increase research activity. Further investment in STEM subjects would lead to an expanded REF submission. Research mattered to undergraduate students as their learning experience was driven by research active staff.
- 2.20 Members requested a presentation on research activity and initiatives at a future Board meeting.

Action: University Secretary

- 2.21 The Board of Governors **NOTED** the presentation

3. Partnerships – Oxford Business College (OBC) Case Study (Presentation)

- 3.1 The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Business Development) outlined the different types of partnership activity undertaken by UWL. Partnerships were part of the University widening participation initiative, provided students with a good higher education experience whilst remaining in their community and offered a good student experience. There are inherent risks in partnerships and all partnership activity required careful monitoring which meant additional resources were required to ensure quality was maintained.

3.2 Some references in this section have been redacted.

- 3.10 The Board of Governors **NOTED** the presentation.

4. Risk Management and Risk Appetite (Presentation)

- 4.1 The Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee provided an overview of some of the sector risks and questioned how University identified the risks it was prepared to take to achieve its mission and whether they were the correct level of risk?
- 4.2 Risk was not always negative, but it was critical to know what you were doing which then allowed you to gauge the level of risk you may be taking.
- 4.3 Members noted that the University Internal Auditors, KPMG, had undertaken an internal audit on partnerships in 2022-23 and although the audit had received a 'substantial assurance' rating the Audit and Risk Committee requested KPMG to conduct a further review on partnerships in 2023-24. The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Business Development) would also present the University Partnership Strategy at the Audit and Risk Committee on 29 February 2024.
- 4.4 Cybersecurity risks had been mitigated with cybersecurity insurance, but it was a sector wide concern and the risk could not be eradicated.
- 4.5 Student expectations were also difficult to manage, and the cost of living crisis has heightened student mental health issues, which had already been increasing as a result of the pandemic.
- 4.6 Social and environmental sustainability remained high on the agenda across the sector and students were driving further initiatives in this area. However as HEIs faced increasing financial difficulty some were finding it difficult to allocate funds for environmental projects.
- 4.7 UWL was in a good position to act quickly when an opportunity arose due to its financial position but VCE needed to remain mindful of maintaining reserves.
- 4.8 An unstable government impacted on the sector as it was not clear how they would react to the sector.
- 4.9 Risk management was reviewed by the Audit and Risk Committee. The Committee received the University Risk Register at three of its four meetings each year. The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Strategy, Performance and Analytics) provided details on the process that created the University Risk Register. UWL staff were aware of the School/College/Professional Services level risk registers as they were embedded and discussed at Committee levels and through regular local discussions.
- 4.10 Although UWL could mitigate against risk it was difficult to factor in the unknown risks and it should be prepared for emerging risks and the pace at which they move from causes for concern to a real risk.
- 4.11 The sector was also expected to comply with regulatory bodies.
- 4.12 The Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee provided an overview of the risk appetite at UWL ranking the risks from 1 to 10. Members agreed that the University needed to ensure that when things went wrong they balanced out by what went well to achieve the University's mission.

- 4.13 Financial risks covered a variety of areas and always remained high on the Risk Register.
- 4.14 Reputational risks were increasing. UWL was prepared to stand out from the crowd if risks were aligned to the University's long term aims. Although UWL was in the University Alliance (UA) mission group it was prepared to work outside of their aims.
- 4.15 Members agreed the Risk Register was streamlined to be an effective working document. The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Strategy, Performance and Analytics) had revised the University Risk register to be aligned to the University Strategic Plan, *Impact 2028*. The revised Risk Register also included the risk appetite for each of the risks. Members agreed the revised Risk Register be presented to the Board of Governors at a meeting later in the academic year.

Action: PVC (Strategy, Performance and Analytics)

- 4.16 Members agreed risk should be discussed at all committee meetings, but it was difficult to predict future risks and members queried whether the University had a cobra-type committee that dealt with fast emerging threats. Members were assured that VCE met on a weekly basis and any emerging risks were discussed.
- 4.17 Members suggested Schools/Colleges/Professional Service Departments be made aware of three key risks so they were aware of them and could review them at a service level. The Risk Appetite Statement was shared with Schools/Colleges/Professional Service Departments and they were aware of the terminology used at the University Risk register level.

Action: PVC (Strategy, Performance and Analytics)

- 4.18 The Board of Governors **NOTED** the presentation.

5. Artificial Intelligence (Presentation)

- 5.1 The Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor, Chief Information Officer and Director of Digital Futures provided some definitions of AI:

Narrow AI – systems that can perform specific tasks or functions, such as image recognition, natural language processing or chess playing.

Machine Learning (ML) – a subset of AI that often uses statistical techniques to give machines the ability to 'learn' from data without being explicitly given the instructions for how to do so. Once the ML algorithm has been trained on data the output of the process is known as the model. This can then be used to make predictions. Models can be simple or complex and attempt to recreate what we see in the world.

A (Large) Language Model (LM, LLM) is a model trained on textual data. The most common use case of LM is text generation. The term LLM is used to designate multi-billion parameter LMs, but this is a moving definition.

- 5.2 The APVC, CIO and Director of Digital Futures used a timeline of famous inventors to illustrate the pace of change with technology; specifically that ChatGBT took only two months to reach the 100m user mark.

- 5.3 AI was still developing at pace, and companies were adopting AI tools as a way of maintaining their currency and not wanting to be left behind.
- 5.4 The APVC, CIO and Director of Digital Future provided examples of the developing world of AI and how they could be of benefit to an organisation but equally could be a hinderance if not used correctly. AI needed very clear, specific instructions or the outcome would be unusable. The quality of AI outputs were improved by the quality of the input.
- 5.5 AI in education provided benefits and risks. Plagiarism software was struggling to keep up with the advances in AI, but students would not stop using it with a recent survey showing 89% of students had used it at least once for University work.
- 5.6 UWL was a Microsoft institution, and all staff and students have access to CoPilot via the Edge web browser. Microsoft had heavily invested in AI and want to see a return on their investment so charged for access to the products. Currently there was no academic discount for access to CoPilot 365, their premium AI product suite.
- 5.7 Technical literacy was improving as AI grew. There was an increasing demand for an AI literate workforce with more and more job advertisements including AI literacy as a requirement or as a desirable. As part of *Impact 2028* the University was committed to supporting a digital future for staff and students. Students were being guided on the dos and don'ts of AI and guidelines were being updated in line with the changes in the AI landscape.
- 5.8 The APVC, CIO and Director of Digital Futures provided a number of examples of AI being used in the London College of Music (LCM) where AI generated multiple choice questions for an exam and a template for marking. In the Careers Service AI was being used as a CV checker. The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Strategy, Performance and Analytics) confirmed AI was being used in the Planning Office to analyse data.
- 5.9 The University was developing a digital futures strategy which would develop digital confidence for staff and students. The strategy would bring together areas of AI that were currently working in silos and embed AI into the curriculum. Assessments would be redesigned and would move away from traditional forms. The University was renowned for its use of SIM facilities, but AI would be used to bring virtual learning more onto the curriculum. In some cases, learning could be fully immersive, and the results of decisions made could be instant.
- 5.10 Members were provided with images of the construction of a Digital Futures laboratory. Members requested a tour of the facility when it was completed.
Action: Director of Property Services
- 5.11 Members agreed AI had initially panicked the academic community but was now being embraced but it was noted that growth would come hand in hand with legal issues and the University should be prepared for this.
- 5.13 Members agreed that the use of AI should be clearly defined with parameters on its use set out in policies for staff and students.

- 5.14 Members agreed that when AI is used in a document or as part of a University wide process it should be clearly set out that AI was part of the process that generated the document.
- 5.15 The APVC, CIO and Director of Digital Futures informed members that when staff and students used AI facilities provided by the University their information was kept private and could only be accessed within the University. The University Learning Analytics Policy would be updated to inform users of the contract they had with the University and when they enrolled or joined the University as a member of staff they consented to the exchange of information internally.
- 5.16 All staff would receive appropriate training to fully utilise AI facilities.
- 5.17 The Board of Governors **NOTED** the presentation.

6. Membership of the Board and Committees (BG 2324 14)

- 6.1 The University Secretary updated members on current vacancies on the Board and its Committees.
- 6.2 The recent appointment of the Chair of the Board of Governors had led to a number of vacancies on Committees.
- 6.3 The Board of Governors **APPROVED**:
1. The appointment of Tina Coates, Independent Governor, as a member of the Audit and Risk Committee from 1 January 2024 to run concurrently with her term of office as an Independent Governor,
 2. The appointment of Stuart Wright, Independent Governor, as a member of the Further Education Board and Trustee of the Ruskin College Board from 1 February 2024 until 31 January 2028 to run concurrently with his term of office as an Independent Governor, and
 3. The appointment of Mr Yash Arora, SU VP Activities from 1 January 2024 until the end of his term of office as VP Activities.
- 6.4 The Board of Governors **NOTED** the recommendation to be made to the Ruskin College Board of Trustees for the renewed appointment of Helena Peacock, Independent Governor, as Chair of the Ruskin College of Trustees from 27 January 2024 until 26 January 2026 to run concurrently with her term of office as an Independent Governor.

7. Calendar of meetings for 2024-25 (BG 2324 15)

- 7.1 The University Secretary informed members that the calendar of meetings for 2024-25 was available and dates would be added to members Outlook calendar.
- 7.2 The Board of Governors **NOTED** the calendar of meetings for 2024-25.

8. Closing comments from the Chair of the Board

- 8.1 The Chair of the Board thanked everyone for attending and closed the away day with a number of thoughts.
- 8.2 Members welcomed the opportunity to discuss and review areas of activity that were taking place across the University not driven by the Board but allowed members to envisage what the future held. Members agreed the Board should make time for thinking of future strategies.
- 8.3 The presentation on risk appetite and risk management had allowed the Board to discuss the risk process at UWL.
- 8.4 Members were reminded that the away day had spent time focusing on UWL's history and how the University had been transformed over the last 10-15 years. It was important to remember the past to ensure the UWL brand was protected for the future and the mistakes of the past never happened again.
- 8.5 The meeting closed at 15.45pm.

9. Date of Next Meeting

- 9.1 The next meeting of the Board of Governors will take place on Tuesday, 12 March 2024 at 10am in the Directorate Boardroom

Signed by Derek Hicks
Chair of the Board of Governors

Date

Author: Joshua Heming
Title: University Secretary
Date: February 2024