

## BOARD OF GOVERNORS

# Minutes

Of the Board of Governors meeting held on Tuesday, 9 May 2023 in The Directorate Boardroom

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Present:

Ms Jennifer Bernard (Independent Governor, Chair of the Board of Governors)  
Mr Wladimir Albuja (Student Representative)  
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)  
Mr Derek Hicks (Independent Governor)  
Professor Peter John CBE (President and Vice-Chancellor)  
Ms Maisie Kelly (SU President)  
Mr Jonathan Lawrence (Independent Governor)  
Professor Heather Loveday (Professoriate Representative)  
Dr Christopher McLaverty (Independent Governor)  
Ms Andrea Miller (Independent Governor)  
Ms Kerry O'Callaghan (Independent Governor)  
Ms Helena Peacock (Independent Governor)  
Dr Paul Sahota (Independent Governor)  
Mr Kiran Virdee (Independent Governor)  
Mr Stuart Wright (Independent Governor)

In attendance:

Mr Adrian Ellison (APVC and Chief Information Officer)  
Mr Patrick Fuller (Group Chief Financial Officer)  
Dr Suresh Gamlath (PVC, Business Development)  
Mr Joshua Heming (Interim University Secretary)  
Mr Neil Henderson (Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development)  
Ms Tracy McAuliffe (APVC for Student Affairs) (for agenda item 8)  
Ms Coral Mason (Assistant Clerk to the Board)  
Ms Sara Raybould (Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Education and Student Experience)  
Dr Kostas Tzortzis (PVC Strategic Planning and Data Services)  
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 Members welcomed Joshua Heming, Interim University Secretary, to his first Board meeting.

## **2. Minutes of the Meeting held on 14 March 2023 (BG 2223 25)**

- 2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 14 March 2023 were confirmed as a fair and accurate record.

## **3. Matters Arising Report (BG 2223 26)**

### **Meeting of 14 March 2023**

- 3.1 The Interim University Secretary confirmed that all items were on the agenda or had been completed.
- 3.2 The Interim University Secretary confirmed the consultation on harassment and sexual misconduct had closed. Initial review against the provisions in the consultation showed that the University would be compliant with most aspects but that additional training and development of a single student facing document would be required.

## **4. Approval of recommendations from Committees (BG 2223 27)**

### **Governance and Nominations Committee meeting of 2 May 2023**

#### **Appointment of the Chair of the Board of Governors (Appendix 1)**

- 4.1 The Project Manager informed members that the process had been thorough and had included working with Nurole, online recruitment consultants.
- 4.2 The Board of Governors **APPROVED** the appointment of Mr Derek Hicks as Chair of the Board of Governors from 1 August 2023 to 31 July 2026.

#### **Membership of the Board of Governors and Committees (Appendix 2)**

- 4.3 The Interim University Secretary informed members that several Independent Governors and the Academic Board representative terms of office were due to be renewed.
- 4.4 The Board of Governors **APPROVED** the re-appointment of:
  - The re-appointment of Mr Steve Fowler, Independent Governor, Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee and Lead Governor for Safeguarding for his third term of office from 1 November 2023 to 31 October 2026,
  - The re-appointment of Ms Kerry O'Callaghan, Independent Governor, Member of the Student Liaison Committee and member of the Honorary Awards

Committee for her third term of office from 1 November 2023 to 31 October 2026,

- Ms Helena Peacock, Independent Governor, Chair of the Further Education Board and member of the Finance Committee for her third term of office from 1 November 2023 to 31 October 2026,
- Mr Kiran Virdee, Independent Governor and deputy Chair of the Finance Committee for his second term of office from 1 October 2023 to 30 September 2026, and
- Mr James Edmunds, Academic Board Representative, for his second term of office from 1 November 2023 to 31 October 2026.

4.5 A panel of Governors, the Vice-Chancellor and the Chair of the Board of Governors interviewed candidates for two co-opted vacancies on the Audit and Risk Committee and one vacancy on the Finance Committee.

4.6 The Board of Governors **APPROVED** the following appointments:

- Ms Nicola Arnold as a co-opted member on the Audit and Risk Committee from 1 June 2023 to 31 May 2026,
- Ms Jo Croft as a co-opted member on the Audit and Risk Committee from 1 June 2023 to 31 May 2026, and
- Mr Neil Ashton as a co-opted member on the Finance Committee from 1 June 2023 to 31 May 2026

## 5. Vice-Chancellor's Briefing (BG 2223 28)

5.1 The Vice-Chancellor updated members on the following:

- Members were informed of the sad passing of Judith Spurrett, a long serving member of staff, Adrian Pelosi, a member of the facilities team and Dr Patricia Walker, a Visiting Professor and honorary graduand of the University.
- Members were further informed of the most recent passing of Dave Proctor who was a longstanding member of staff at Ruskin College.
- UCU confirmed industrial action short of a strike would take place from 20 April 2023 alongside an indefinite marking and assessment boycott.
- Concerns had been raised through the parliamentary review of the Office for Students (OfS) about government interference with the OfS and claims by student panel members about how they had been sidelined.
- Sector finances were increasingly causing concern with 117 HEIs being subject to 'further assessment', 51 subject to 'informal engagement and monitoring' and 31 subject to 'formal monitoring'. The government continued to stress the need for market correction which would probably lead to mergers or HEIs reducing their activities.
- Governors were informed that Auditors were increasingly reluctant to take on new clients and sign off accounts where there were going concern issues as they were liable for any financial irregularities.
- Sir Keir Starmer confirmed if Labour formed the next government they would not be removing tuition fees.

- The sector pension schemes continued to cause concern with the Teachers Pension Scheme (TPS) now aiming to increase employer contributions to as much as 30%.
- Undergraduate recruitment had increased by 2.1% with acceptances up by 2%. Home postgraduate recruitment had fallen by 17% but this was anticipated across the sector as the job market was strong. International recruitment continued to be buoyant with postgraduate applications up 42% and undergraduate applications up 56%. The University had increased student numbers across a number of countries including China and Nigeria. Members were informed that growth in international students was sector wide, but the University was mindful of not being dependent on the income as the government could reduce the number of visas issued at any time.
- NHS recruitment remained a challenge with applications down 20% but the quality of applicants had improved which meant offers were up 2%. Work in CNMH would continue over the summer to convert offers to acceptances.
- The National Student Survey (NSS) had closed with results expected in mid-July. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education and Student Experience) confirmed an 82.51% completion rate. There had been a few in-house surveys running alongside the NSS which indicated a positive outcome.
- Members congratulated Ms Maisie Kelly on her re-election as the SU President for 2023-24.
- Enterprise income was expected to achieve £100m in 2022-23 due to increased activity around accommodation, Ruskin, DSL and summer schools. The University had further worked on stabilising partnership activity at home and abroad.
- **Some references in this section have been redacted.**
- Recruitment at Ruskin College remained challenging, but it was hoped undergraduate numbers would grow to 50 by September 2023. If numbers continued to grow then the College may reduce or close all level 1 and 2 courses.
- The Levelling Up Shadow Minister, Alex Norris MP, would be holding a seminar at Ruskin College on 11 May 2023. David Blunkett had agreed to speak at an event in the autumn and it was hoped this would generate further interest from Labour leaders.
- The Ruskin Fellowship of Students will hold its first conference in five years on 25 June 2023.
- Members extended their thanks to Helena Peacock, Chair of the Further Education Board, for all of her time and effort navigating the regulatory landscape of the FE sector.
- Members were informed that UWL maintained political neutrality but its voice, at a political and lobbying level was through its membership of University Alliance (UA).
- The Vice-Chancellor informed members that the Labour Party policy on Levelling Up was not clear but it was hoped funding would continue and would be focused on where it was needed. Members agreed to invite Professor Graeme Atherton, to present to the Board of Governors on the work being undertaken by the Centre for Inequality and Levelling Up (CEILUP).

**Action: Interim University Secretary**

5.2 The Board of Governors **NOTED** the Vice-Chancellor's update.

## 6. Impact 2028 (BG 2223 29/Presentation)

6.1 The Vice-Chancellor opened the presentation setting out the current trajectory and the challenges having taken account of comments made at the Board of Governors awayday on 11 October 2022. *Impact 2028* would factor in current sector challenges but would remain flexible to ensure any further external challenges could be addressed quickly.

6.2 *Impact 2028* set out the mission and vision for the future with the strategic priorities being:

- Top 50 in the UK
- New School of Medicine
- Digital Futures Lab
- Top 70 Research in UK
- Gold for sustainability and climate action, and
- World ranking of @700.

6.3 The Vice-Chancellor outlined the challenges the University faced:

- **Challenge 1 – Promoting student success and lifelong learning.** The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education and Student Experience) confirmed the heart of the student experience was to ensure the success of individuals and the challenge would be to ensure this was being maintained in an ever-shifting horizon. The Lifelong Learning (Higher Education Fee Limits) Bill would allow students to choose how and when they wished to study but would make it hard for HEIs to map a student's progress.
- **Challenge 2 – Building scalable, impactful research.** The appointment of a Director of Research would provide a focus point for research. The University would invest in research by appointing more research active staff, encouraging new researchers and increasing the number of research students. This would foster an environment where research could flourish and lead to an increase in publications and external funding. This would improve the University's next REF position and, therefore, improve the REF rating.
- **Challenge 3 – Deploying and initiating AI and other digital technologies.** The opening of the Digital Lab led to questions about how the facility could be used and further ways the estate could accommodate AI. Members agreed that it was difficult to predict the full impact of AI, particularly on the curriculum, as it remained unclear how it would impact learning and the jobs of the future. It was difficult to measure success when it was not possible to understand the long-term impact. The focus remained on preparing students for the future job market, but AI would impact on research activities and the University would aim to prepare for the changes to come. Members suggested partnering with a leading technology company that could ensure UWL stayed one step ahead of its competitors noting that it was hard to find and retain experts. It was agreed that UWL schools and professional services were probably adapting practices to AI developments already and it

was suggested a guest speaker be invited to present to the Board of Governors when appropriate.

**Action: Interim University Secretary**

- **Challenge 4 – Embedding sustainability throughout the curriculum.** Work was in progress with the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Business Development) who leading discussions with Heads of Schools and Professional Services.
- **Challenge 5 – Rebalancing the curriculum from SHAPE to STEM.** The University would integrate STEM subjects across the curriculum whilst maintaining excellence in SHAPE courses. The University would aim to attract students who were traditionally under-represented in STEM subjects. The opening of the School of Medicine was part of this initiative and would also include sourcing external funding which would in turn increase community engagement.
- **Challenge 6 – Developing enterprise activities and innovative entrepreneurs.** Partnership activity continued to be monitored and developed ensuring regulatory compliance was maintained. In addition, entrepreneurship would continue to be embedded across all aspects of University activity.
- **Challenge 7 – Generating local, national and global partnerships.** The online library, Pelago, offered a unique opportunity for partners across the world to share a resource that linked everyone together. The Provost and Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor ensured the University focused its overseas activities across a wide variety of countries providing balance and not being dependent on a single continent. Home partnerships would also be developed with an opportunity to build a strong local partnership in Feltham.
- **Challenge 8 – Maintaining a strong, sustainable financial base.** The University would continue to ensure a healthy surplus was maintained to invest into the student experience and capital projects. The diversification of income had allowed the University to be opportunistic.
- **Challenge 9 – Creating a high performing staff culture.** The current People Strategy would be adapted to meet the needs of *Impact 2028*.

6.4 Members thanked the Vice-Chancellor for a very comprehensive presentation but questioned how the strategy made UWL unique and where would it be in 20 years? Members suggested the strategy end with a statement on where the University aspired be in the future. What would it look like and how would it support staff and students?

**Action: Vice-Chancellor**

6.5 The Vice-Chancellor informed members that challenges two to five would be the areas that would lead the changes making UWL unique and their success would determine UWL's future.

6.6 Members were encouraged to email the Vice-Chancellor with any further comments they wished to make. The final version would be presented to the Board of Governors meeting on 11 July 2023.

- 6.7 The Board of Governors **NOTED** the presentation.
- 7. Tribal SITS Student Record System implementation project (ARM) update (Oral)**
- 7.1 The PVC (Strategic Planning and Data Services) confirmed Phase 1 of the project had been implemented and staff were now processing all applicants for September 2023 through the new admissions system.
- 7.2 Phases 2 and 3 will complete the delivery of the product. Phase 2 would establish the building blocks of the student academic lifecycle and would be tested in May and would go live in August 2023. Phase 3 would include assessment, progression and graduation and would go live in stages through August 2023 to early 2024.
- 7.3 During the implementation the focus on staff training was critical to ensure the project was delivered on time.
- 7.4 The migration of data would take place once the whole system was live.
- 7.5 The PVC (Strategic Planning and Data Services) informed members that UWL had purchased a standard product which met UWL's requirements and ensured the project would be on time and on budget. Tailoring the product to provide additional bespoke services would be considered only if they were business critical.
- 7.6 The Board of Governors **NOTED** the update.
- 8. How UWL financially support students (Presentation)**
- 8.1 The APVC for Student Affairs informed members that the presentation provided details on the counselling and financial support offered to students, particularly through the current cost of living crisis, but noted the information provided was not exhaustive and students had the opportunity to source funds and support from the Students' Union.
- 8.2 All students were offered the opportunity to attend money and funding advice seminars providing pointers on how to budget but also to highlight issues such as gambling awareness and how to be aware of potential scams on social media. Sessions were run by Student Money Advisers with external speakers also providing specialist sessions. These included representatives from Barclays Bank and the Citizens Advice Bureau. Unfortunately, the sessions had been poorly attended and whilst students were worried about the cost of living crisis they did not seem to be taking up the opportunities on offer which would provide them with additional support. The APVC for Student Affairs acknowledged that some students may be reluctant to discuss their financial circumstances, but it was difficult to see how they could be supported if they did not want to discuss their problems. Students had the opportunity to book 1-2-1 sessions with a Money Adviser which were confidential.

- 8.3 The University had a webpage dedicated to cost of living support and had flyers and posters advertising the various support mechanisms. Personal Tutors were also provided with information on available funds.
- 8.4 The APVC for Student Affairs provided details on the type of financial support offered and the funds available. The Office for Students (OfS) also provided funds to be distributed to students including a cost of living grant which were managed by Student Support.
- 8.5 Previously funds were usually paid via bank transfer, but students also had the opportunity to apply for emergency funds which were small cash payments of a maximum of £70. In collaboration with John Smith, the University Book Store, the University had adopted Aspire Cash to distribute scholarship and bursary funds. This reduced the overall cost to the University but allowed the University to review how funds were being spent. Aspire Cash operated as a debit card but was not linked to a student's bank account which meant funds were not swallowed up paying off overdrafts and loans.
- 8.6 If a student did apply for funds they were required to provide bank statements and any other financial statements that may be relevant and, whilst this may appear intrusive, it was to ensure funds were directed to those in most need.
- 8.7 The University had recently introduced a fund for students who were unable to afford gown hire for graduation. Specialist funds to support students with disabilities and those who had been a part of the care system were also available.
- 8.8 International students who experienced unexpected difficulty receiving funds from their home countries could also apply for support.
- 8.9 The Group Chief Financial Officer informed members that if students were experiencing difficulties paying for accommodation they could apply to pay by instalments.
- 8.10 The Board of Governors **NOTED** the presentation.

## **9. Institute for Policing Studies (Presentation)**

- 9.1 The APVC and Chief Information Officer provided a recap on the establishment of the Institute for Policing Studies (IPS) which was initially a part of the School of Human and Social Sciences. It was a development led by the late Professor Marcia Worrell with the Metropolitan Police and Babcock as part of the new national Police Education Quality Framework (PEQF). The contract was signed in January 2021 with the first cohort of students joining soon after. The Institute of Policing Studies was launched in November 2021.
- 9.2 Three learning pathways working directly with the Metropolitan Police, the training provider Babcock, and three other HEIs, were open, the PCDA, DHEP-U and DHEP-D with 1507 students enrolled across the courses. Attrition across the courses was 8.1%. Two UWL courses in Policing (one BSc and one MSc) were also offered in the IPS.



- 9.3 Sir Mark Rowley, Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, is supportive of the Framework but the current Home Secretary would like to include non-graduate routes which would be at level five, for one year, and would not be accredited.
- 9.4 Concerns had been raised around the end of course, End point Assessment (EPA). The assessment requirements was set by the College of Policing and the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE) but was too onerous. UWL would be undertaking a full curriculum review and aimed to provide a new suite of assessments for those elements within its control. It was also working with Babcock and the Metropolitan Police to protect learning time for students.
- 9.5 The APVC and Chief Information Officer confirmed the partnership with Babcock and three other HEIs remained strong. Discussions were taking place to add new partners like EasyJet who were looking for specialist investigator courses, to offer postgraduate and professional doctorate programmes, a review of the leadership development programmes and to look at developing international partnerships.
- 9.6 A discussion took place around the identity of the cohort and whether students considered themselves students or Police Constables. The Metropolitan Police Commissioner wanted them to be first and foremost Police Constables, but members agreed that while they were on campus they were students and should be a part of the UWL student population. The Students' Union were looking at ways to integrate the cohort into the student population.
- 9.7 The APVC and Chief Information Officer confirmed the contract with Babcock was for five years but could be extended for a further three years.
- 9.8 The Board of Governors **NOTED** the presentation.

### **Academic matters**

#### **10. Further Education Board (BG 2223 33)**

##### **Minutes of the meeting held on 7 February 2023**

- 10.1 The Chair of the FE Board informed members that the meeting was mainly taken up with Ofsted matters.
- 10.2 Members **NOTED** the Minutes and items of business discussed.

#### **11. Academic Board (BG 2223 34)**

##### **Minutes of the meeting held on 15 February 2023**

- 11.1 Members **NOTED** the Minutes and items of business discussed.

#### **12. Chairs briefing on Committee Activity (BG 2223 24)**

##### **Audit and Risk Committee meeting held on 2 March 2023 (Appendix 1)**

- 12.1 The internal audit on Core Financials had received a significant assurance rating.

- 12.2 The internal audit on Sustainability had been deferred to 2023-24 and had been replaced by an audit on Apprenticeships.
- 12.3 BDO had been re-appointed as the University's external Auditors.
- 12.4 The internal audit on Ruskin College would take place in 2024-25.
- 12.5 Members **NOTED** the Minutes and items of business discussed.

**Governance and Nominations Committee meeting held on 2 May 2023  
(Appendix 2)**

- 12.6 Members **NOTED** the Minutes and items of business discussed.

**13. Any other business**

- 13.1 Members were provided with details on the Professional and Public Lecture Series for Spring/Summer 2023 and were encouraged to attend.

**14. Date of Next Meeting**

- 14.1 The next meeting of the Board of Governors will be on Tuesday, 11 July 2023 at 10am in the Directorate Boardroom.

**Signed by Ms Jennifer Bernard  
Chair of the Board of Governors**

Date

**Author:** Joshua Heming  
**Title:** Interim University Secretary  
**Date:** May 2023