

The University of Manchester

BOARD OF GOVERNORS

Wednesday, 19 February 2020

Present: Mr Edward Astle (in the Chair), President and Vice-Chancellor, Dr John Stageman (Deputy Chair), Mrs Ann Barnes, Mr Gary Buxton, Mr Michael Crick, Prof Danielle George, Mr Colin Gillespie, Mr Nick Hillman, Prof Steve Jones, Ms Sara Khan, Mr Kwame Kwarteng (General Secretary of UMSU), Mrs Bridget Lea, Mr Robin Phillips, Mr Andrew Spinoza, Prof Nalin Thakkar, Dr Delia Vazquez, Mrs Alice Webb and Ms Ros Webster (19)

In attendance: The Registrar, Secretary and Chief Operating Officer (RSCOO), the Vice-President (Learning, Teaching and Students) (item 7 only), the Interim Director of Finance, the Director for the Student Experience (item 7 only), the Associate Vice-President for External Relations and Reputation (item 8 only) and the Deputy Secretary.

Apologies: Prof Clare Alexander, Dr Reinmar Hager, Dr Neil McArthur, Mr Richard Solomons

1. Declarations of Interest

Reported:

- (1) The Chair of the Board had been appointed as Chair of upReach, a charity that collaborated with universities and employers to facilitate entry to graduate employment for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. The University was involved in a pilot with upReach; whilst this was not a Board issue, the Chair had advised upReach that he could not be involved in any discussions about the partnership.
- (2) Ros Webster declared an interest in item 7 and item 11 iii) as a member of staff in the Directorate for the Student Experience, albeit not directly affected by the changes arising from the Student Experience Programme.

2. Membership

Reported:

- (1) Prof Claire Alexander had been appointed to the vacant position for a Category 3 (Senate) member for an initial term ending on 31 August 2022. Prof Alexander had a long-standing commitment predating Board membership that meant she was unable to attend this meeting (although she had attended for part of the Accountability Review session that preceded the meeting).
- (2) Caroline Johnstone had been appointed as a lay member of the Board and Chair of Finance Committee, from 1 September 2020. As agreed by the Board, Caroline was invited to attend Board and Finance Committee meetings for the remainder of 2019-20, as an observer.

3. Minutes

Resolved:

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 November 2019 were approved as a correct record subject to a minor amendment (p2, item 4(8), "ID Manchester" not "ID Management."

4. Matters arising from the minutes

Noted:

- (1) An updated report on ongoing issues that had been raised at previous meetings addressed either within the agenda or to come forward at a later date.
- (2) The report contained a link to the consultation on the revisions to the Socially Responsible Investment Policy; this would be circulated separately (with an accompanying frequently asked questions document) after the meeting.

5. President and Vice-Chancellor's report

Received: the report from the President and Vice-Chancellor.

Reported:

- (1) In relation to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, the Home Office had agreed to provide automatic extension of visas for those affected until 31 March 2020.
- (2) Recent ministerial change had resulted in the brief for universities and science being split between two different ministers.
- (3) The University had submitted bids for government support in relation to both ID Manchester and commercialisation of graphene. There was also potential University involvement in further [Catapult](#) developments.
- (4) Strike action by the University and College Union (UCU) was scheduled for 20-21, 24-26 February and 2-5 and 9-13 March. This was a continuation of action taken in November and December 2019 following ballots relating to pay and working conditions and the Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS), and was combined with continuous action short of a strike. There was disappointment that this was going ahead despite ongoing discussions to resolve the dispute. As noted previously, the University shared many of the concerns expressed by UCU regarding working conditions and was taking steps to address these.
- (5) UCU has issued an incorrect statement claiming that 'the University profits from funds obtained from funding bodies intended to pay our salaries while we are on strike'. As recognised in the UCU communication, the costs for fixed term contract staff working on funded research projects typically fall into the 'directly incurred costs' category and funders are not charged for days when these staff are on strike. For those staff whose costs are 'directly allocated' the University is obliged, irrespective of the impact of any strike action, to ensure that projects continue to involve the total amount of research activity agreed with the funder, as stipulated in their award notification. The University would not 'profit' from any pay deducted due to strike action, which will be used to benefit students.
- (6) The University's recruitment position continued to compare favourably with the sector as a whole and its peer group with a significant increase in international undergraduate applications. The University continued its efforts to diversify its international student population, although this was still dominated by China; efforts to enhance recruitment from the United States, referred to at an earlier meeting, had borne fruit but the University was starting from a low baseline.
- (7) The report from the Finance Committee noted in principle approval to establish a new entity to enhance commercialisation of graphene and other two dimensional materials.

Noted:

- (1) The Universities and Colleges Employers Association (UCEA) had consulted its members in presenting new and positive proposals addressing issues such as casual employment, workload and mental health and gender and ethnicity pay gaps. Whilst UCEA could not impose solutions on employers, there was a view that more could be done to publicise the broad sympathy with some UCU concerns (as outlined in (4) above) and whether support might be forthcoming from other sector bodies (e.g. Committee of University Chairs) to emphasise this.
- (2) The governance of the USS was currently under review with the potential for UCEA to assume the trustee/non-executive director roles currently occupied by Universities UK (UUK).

(3) A brief update on the aftermath of the conviction of Reynhard Sinaga, the University graduate who had been convicted of multiple counts of rape. The University had been praised for the speed and proactive nature of its response after the case was made public, particularly the dedicated helpline for those affected or potentially affected.

(4) Comments and questions about a range of recent sector and University press coverage; in relation to students being asked to sign non-disclosure agreements (the subject of a recent Freedom of Information request and related press report), it was confirmed that the University does not engage in this practice.

(5) As discussed at the Accountability Review, scope for further development of the University's Distance Learning offering, noting that this and teaching innovation more broadly could form the basis for a future Board briefing.

Action: Deputy Secretary

6. Operational Priorities

Received: Operational Priorities for 2020-21 as approved by Planning and Resources Committee.

Resolved: to approve the Operational Priorities in principle, subject to the inclusion of detailed specific targets linked to the new Strategic Plan to be considered at the July 2020 meeting (the Planning Conference in March 2020 would receive the theme plans for each element of the new strategy).

Action: Director of Planning

7. Student Experience Programme update

Received: a summary report on the scope, ambition and progress to date of the Student Experience Programme (SEP), the major change initiative which brings together several inter-related change projects under a single programme of work to transform the student experience across all stages of the student journey.

Reported:

(1) The business case for the SEP had been approved by Planning and Resources Committee at its meeting on 4 February 2020, following endorsement by Finance Sub Committee and Strategic Change Sub Committee; Finance Committee granted financial approval at its meeting on 5 February 2020.

(2) The report reflected the more robust approach to management and delivery of change and related risk (e.g suitably experienced Programme Board, Gateway Review process and the role of the recently established Strategic Change Sub-Committee). The revised scope for the SEP included attendance monitoring.

(3) The report outlined the significant benefits for students, academic and Professional Services staff, alongside financial benefits (overall target recurrent saving of up to £7 million per annum). The report outlined major benefits and deliverables already achieved by SEP as well as the benefits tracking process.

Noted:

(1) In response to a question, the focus on attendance monitoring was intended to be supportive and not punitive. Robust data, capable of being shared with students, enabled the University to focus on student engagement and drive improvements to the student experience. It was important to ensure that implications for students with disabilities and access needs were taken into account

(2) Comparative Uniforum data showed that the University's applications and admissions functions were less efficient than its UK comparators. Whilst competitors would also be seeking improvements and efficiencies in this area, the University had considerable scope to improve. The ambition was to move from upper quartile (i.e. least efficient) to lower quartile (i.e. most efficient). This could be achieved, for example, by making greater use of automation, introducing a more consistent staffing model, with more generic role descriptors and putting in Customer Relationship Management (CRM) capacity from the applications stage. The level of customisation and lack of standardisation in the legacy system had resulted in data quality and integrity issues that would be resolved by SEP.

(3) In response to questions, a number of examples of potential process improvements were cited. The current system of attendance monitoring was paper based, relied on manual input and did not link to the

student record system. Information that was vital to measure student engagement was not available in a consistent, timely format and this could result in students withdrawing from programmes where earlier data informed intervention might have prevented this. Similar improvements and efficiencies could be made to processes for submission of mitigating circumstances (for assessment purposes) and the process for those international students who were required to register with the Police.

(4) In response to questions and comments about ensuring sufficient incentivisation for delivering change and savings, the reduction in operating costs resulting from implementation of SEP would benefit the faculties.

(5) Ensuring sufficient and robust User Acceptance Testing (with provision of appropriate backfill arrangements for staff involved in testing) was an integral and budgeted part of the SEP.

(6) The Programme Board had endorsed an approach to student engagement and partnership working with students across all elements of the Programme.

(7) The Board welcomed the comprehensive and accessible report and affirmed its support for, and endorsement of, the approach set out in the report, noting that the SEP was a precursor to a wider programme of transformation of Professional Services.

8. External Stakeholders Survey

Received: a report setting out the results of the eighth biennial External Stakeholder Survey, conducted in the summer of 2019. The research was conducted by The Knowledge Partnership (KTP), an educational research consultancy, on behalf of the University and captured perceptions of the University and its performance amongst a group of 66 senior engaged stakeholders. An Action Plan approved by Planning and Resources Committee was appended to the report

Reported:

(1) Key areas of strength highlighted in the report included:

- Strong reputation, both nationally and globally.
- Highly rated for research and has recognisable areas of expertise (Research Beacons)
- Impressive campus developments and contribution to the changing dynamic of the city.
- Engages well with city and community, particularly around the social responsibility agenda.
- One of the strongest universities in the UK after Oxford, Cambridge, UCL, and Imperial.
- High-profile President and Vice-Chancellor.

(2) Areas with potential reputational impact included:

- Industrial Biotechnology and Global Inequalities were less well known than other Research Beacons (Cancer, Energy and Advanced Materials).
- Teaching quality perceived as inconsistent and lower than research quality.
- Social responsibility activity is known in the region, but not nationally and internationally.
- Lack of recognisable international partnerships.
- The future for graphene commercialisation
- Concerns over business engagement, particularly the offering to Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs)

Noted (in response to questions from members):

(1) The concerns regarding business engagement were not consistent with independent metrics which generally indicated that the University performed well in this area, so more attention to consistent messaging and awareness raising of the University offer may be required.

(2) The recognition of improvements to the campus was welcome and reflected recent investment;

- perception in this area had improved markedly over the past decade.
- (3) The recognition of excellent leadership by the President and Vice-Chancellor was accompanied by comments about the importance of succession and future leadership planning.
 - (4) In relation to learning and teaching, comments were recognised and efforts to ensure consistent improvement in this area were ongoing (for example the establishment of the Institute of Learning and Teaching).
 - (5) The qualitative External Stakeholders Survey was accompanied by a wealth of quantitative data about University brand and reputation, including surveys of parents and prospective students.
 - (6) The potential to promote and publicise more effectively, the University's excellence in Industrial Biotechnology.
 - (6) Whilst noting the relatively small sample size, efforts were made to ensure that there was diversity of respondents. The discussion with participants provided a rich source of data.
 - (7) Currently, gender and ethnicity details of survey participants were not captured and it would be useful and illuminating for this information to be recorded in future surveys

9. Chair's Report

Received: a report from the Chair covering a range of relevant matters.

Reported: the Chair drew members' attention to the following specific matters:

- (1) Expressions of interest were invited in the role of Deputy Chair that would become vacant on 1 September 2020 when John Stageman stood down from the Board.
- (2) The section of the report regarding communication between members.
- (3) Correspondence relating to the Manchester Engineering Campus Development (MECD) project.

a) On 9 January 2020, the Chair had received a letter from 200 academic staff requesting the following in relation to the MECD project:

- a review of all research laboratory space allocation, with clear communication to all staff regarding the expected location of space for their research activities;
- a review and a reversal of the decision to allocate all academics to shared offices
- a review of the occupancy plan for MECD, and delivery of solutions that provide increase of the available space.

b) The Chair had responded, acknowledging receipt of the letter, and advising that the Board would be made aware of the concerns highlighted in the communication, and that specifically:

- space allocation is a management issue, rather than a matter for the Board, and that the executive would respond separately;
- the Chair had asked Uniac to perform an independent review of the other issues raised, ie. research laboratories and total space budget, which would be considered by the Board at its March 2020 meeting, alongside a management response.

c) The issue of academic workspace in MECD was also considered by the meeting of Senate on 29 January 2020, a meeting attended by the Chair of the Board as an observer. A detailed Faculty management response to the 9 January 2020 letter had been shared with Senate and was appended to the Chair's report.

Noted:

- (1) Approximately 80 of the 200 staff supporting the letter would occupy the new MECD campus.
- (2) The MECD pilot had tested a range of workstyles incorporating the widest range of work groups and work styles of people to be based in MECD. A variety of spaces were evaluated and small, single cellular

spaces were modelled but were found to be appropriate only for limited use rather than as permanent office space.

(3) Though the Pilot confirmed that open plan working was viable for academics, there was recognition that for some academic staff, the lack of enclosed office provision was a significant concern. Many successful elements from the Pilot were incorporated into the plans for workspace, but in response to concerns arising from the Pilot, provision had been made for four person-shared offices for academic staff, in addition to open plan working.

(4) Shared office space was already used successfully elsewhere across the sector and the University (including within the Faculty), and many academic staff, including engineers, have experience of and have worked in shared and open plan workplaces previously. In response to a question, there was nothing to indicate that the proposed configuration would hinder future recruitment, with shared office space allowing enhanced opportunities for collaborative working.

(5) Staff concerns were taken very seriously and there was commitment to ongoing and proactive evaluation to ensure the most effective use of available space (this included a recent visit to University College London to review configuration of comparable space in that institution).

(6) Members with professional experience of similar, large-scale transformational relocations counselled that the immediate pre-occupation period was often the most challenging time and experience suggested that opposition tended to diminish once the building was occupied.

Resolved: to endorse the approach outlined above (i.e that space allocation is a management issue, rather than a matter for the Board) and consider the Uniac report on the other issues raised (ie. research laboratories and total space budget) alongside a management response at its March 2020 meeting.

Action: RSCOO and Deputy Secretary

10. Secretary's Report-Exercise of Delegations

Reported: award of Emeritus Professorships and pursuant to General Regulation VII.4, the Common Seal of the University had been affixed to instruments recorded in entries 2215 to 2233.

11. Board committee reports

(i) Finance Committee (4 February 2020)

Received: a summary of the meeting of Finance Committee held on 4 February 2020.

Reported:

(1) As noted above, the Committee had approved in principle a proposal to establish Manchester Graphene Company as an entity to provide focus for commercialisation of graphene and other two-dimensional materials, subject to further discussion of issues as outlined in the report. There were new and emerging viable propositions in this area.

(2) As also noted above, the Committee had approved the business case and budget for the Student Experience Programme.

(3) The Committee had begun to consider implications of the emerging Estates Strategy, with some challenges noted in the short-medium term.

(4) The Committee had received the key principles, targets and assumptions for the five-year planning round and there would be further discussion and scenario planning at the March 2020 Planning Conference (including the implications of moving beyond the minimum 5% annual budget surplus).

ii) Audit and Risk Committee (27 January 2020)

Received: a summary of the meeting of the Audit and Risk Committee held on 27 January 2020.

Reported:

(1) The Committee had approved the Transparent Approach to Costing (TRAC and TRAC(T)) returns for

submission to the Office for Students.

(2) Other matters considered by the Committee included the action plan arising from the Uniac review of cyber-security and management of privilege access, the latest satellite entities review report, the latest internal audit report, updated risk maps and risk registers at institutional and faculty level, and an update action in response to the external audit management letter.

iii) Staffing Committee (4 February 2020)

Received: the minutes of the meeting of Staffing Committee meeting held on 4 February 2020, noting that a summary report of future meetings would be submitted to the Board.

Reported: the Committee had considered proposals relating to both the second phase of the Student Experience Programme and the Wolfson Molecular Imaging Centre. In both cases, it was proposed that the University enter into collective consultation with the campus trade unions about potential redundancies arising from the proposals and that, subject to consultation, this would include a voluntary severance scheme. The number of posts in scope and at risk was contained within the minutes of the Committee meeting.

Resolved: having given full and proper consideration to recommendations from Staffing Committee:

(1) To achieve the required changes outlined in the report the University should enter into consultation with the campus trade unions about the proposals outlined and, subject to consultation, should progress with its proposals for voluntary severance.

(2) The University continues to take all steps outlined in the report to avoid the need for redundancy wherever possible and, in particular, to support the use of the University's Voluntary Severance Scheme in the affected areas.

(3) The Staffing Committee continue to oversee these proposals in accordance with Part II of Ordinance XXIII.

Action: Director of Human Resources

iv) Nominations Committee (15 January 2020)

Received: a summary of the meeting of the Nominations Committee held on 15 January 2020.

Reported: the Committee had considered a number of matters including: recent appointments to the Board, revisions to the Committee's terms of reference, progress with the review of the composition of the General Assembly, the process to seek a new Pro-Chancellor (with effect from 1 September 2020) and potential further changes to Statutes and related Ordinances, including those related to the appointment of the Chancellor.

Noted:

(1) The majority of the University's peers had adopted a nomination (as opposed to an election) process for the post of Chancellor; the current practice precluded student involvement and this could be rectified in a revised process.

(2) Members were invited to submit expressions of interest in retaining their position on the smaller, revised General Assembly. In due course, members would be circulated with names of prospective General Assembly members to ascertain both whether any were known to them, and the potential for personal contact to encourage take-up of the offer of membership.

Resolved: to approve the Committee's revised terms of reference in principle, subject to review to confirm that clause 1 paid sufficient attention to the Committee's role in succession planning.

Action: Deputy Secretary

v) Remuneration Committee (20 November 2019)

Received: a report from the meeting of Remuneration Committee held on 20 November 2019 (further to an oral report to the Board meeting on 20 November 2019).

Noted: the Committee would continue to receive and reflect on trend data and rationale for staff receiving salaries of £100,000 or more per annum.

12. Report from the Senate (29 January 2020)

Received: a report from the meeting of Senate held on 29 January 2020.

Noted: the meeting had been attended by the Chair of the Board, with an invitation to non-Senate members to attend future meetings.

13. University-Students' Union Relations Committee-UURC (13 January 2020)

Received: a report from the UURC meeting held on 13 January 2020.

14. Planning and Resources Committee (10 December 2019 and 4 February 2020)

Received: reports from the above meetings of Planning and Resources Committee.

Resolved: to approve the Office for Students Access Agreement and Student Monitoring Return 2018-19, confirming that the Board had monitored the University's compliance with the provisions of its access agreement.

Action: Deputy Secretary

15. Forward Agenda and Programme of Work

Received: the updated Board forward agenda.

16. Dates of meetings in 2020-21

Received: dates of Board and Board committee meetings in 2020-21

17. Any other business

i) Accountability Review session

Noted: the following comments in response to the Chair's request for feedback on the format and content of the Accountability Review session which had immediately preceded the Board meeting

(1) The split between the accountability and planning elements (introduced for the first time this year) had worked well with more time available for discussion.

(2) Although the pairs' focus on specific areas meant that they might potentially give less attention to other areas, there was general support for continuation of the arrangement and, on balance, the view was that wherever possible the pairs' allocation to specific areas be retained for the next exercise.

(3) Further guidance to pairs and relevant SLT leads would be helpful (although this should not be overly prescriptive).

Action: Deputy Secretary/Director of Planning

(4) Whilst recognising that the Board needed to receive sufficient material to satisfy its responsibility for accountability, further reflection should take place on the volume and content of materials submitted with encouragement to summarise and simplify as far as possible. A reminder of areas of focus and a commitment and action tracker from the previous Accountability Review would also be helpful.

Action: Deputy Secretary/Director of Planning

(5) The Board recognised the extremely challenging nature of the current environment and was appreciative of the work of the senior team. The session had provided evidence of the Board's essential role in providing constructive challenge and critical friendship and the trust between the Board and the senior team.

Close.