

The University of Manchester

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Wednesday, 15 January 2020

Present:

Present: The Pro-Chancellor (and Chair of Board of Governors), Mr Edward Astle (in the Chair) The President and Vice-Chancellor, Councillor Carl Austin-Behan, Mrs Ann Barnes, Ms Lily Barton, Mr Christopher J Boyes, Professor Margaret Brazier, Mr Gary Buxton, Ms Fiona Campbell, Dr Ronald E Catlow, Dr Margaret Collier, Councillor Sandra Collins, Mr Steve Connor, Dr William Hamilton Craig, Mr Michael Crick, Ms Claire Ebrey, Mr Berrisford Edwards, Dr Reinmar Hager, Mr Jim Hancock, Dr Simon Hayward, Professor John R Helliwell, Mr Robert E Hough, Ms Ayla Huseyinoglu, Mr Michael Jayson, Mr Leslie Jones, Mrs Susan Lipton, Professor Graham Lord, Dr Neil McArthur, Dr Simon Merrywest, Dr Alison Newby, Dr Rodger Pannone, Dr Raj Patel, Ms Rana Phool Ur Rehman, Dr Thurai Rahulan, Mr John Schultz, Mr Mark Scoular, Ms Abigail Shapiro, Mr David Soutter, Mr Abdreew Spinoza, Ms Helen C Stevens, Ms Sally Sykes, Mr Michael Taylor, Mrs Sandra Taylor, Professor Nalin Thakkar, Mr Asrar Ul-Haq, Ms Janine Cottingham, Ms Roz Webster and Miss Marie Wright (48)

In attendance: The Director of Finance, the Director for the Student Experience, the Associate Vice-President for Digital Futures and the Deputy Secretary.

1. Introductory Remarks

Reported:

- (1) In the absence of the Chancellor, who was unwell, the Pro-Chancellor and Chair of the Board of Governors, Edward Astle, would chair the meeting.
- (2) The award of national honours to the following University staff: Professor David Hulme (OBE), Professor Adisa Azapagic (MBE) and Professor Gordon Carlson (CBE) and a number of University alumni.
- (3) The sad news of the recent death of Admiral Sir John Kerr, former Pro-Chancellor of the University, recipient of the University Medal of Honour and an honorary life member of General Assembly. The Assembly passed on its sincere condolences to Sir John's family and friends.

2. Minutes

Resolved: The minutes of the meeting held on 26 June 2019 and accompanying action report were approved, subject to minor amendment to those in attendance (adding Mr Chris Boyes and Dr Margaret Collier) and the wording of one of the questions in the action report.

3. Matters arising

(i) Progress on revised composition of General Assembly

Received: a progress report on development of the revised General Assembly.

Reported:

(1) Following the General Assembly meeting in June 2019, current and retiring members were encouraged to submit suggestions for future General Assembly membership. Since the General Assembly meeting, there had also been engagement with senior colleagues, most notably, the Vice President for Social Responsibility, the Associate Vice President for External Relations and Reputation and the Director of Social Responsibility.

(2) Following Nominations Committee scrutiny, this process had resulted in consideration of a significant number of individuals ensuring a balance between a range of areas and sectors. All names put forward by General Assembly members had been considered. Approaches were in the process of being made to individuals to establish their interest in joining the revamped General Assembly.

Resolved: taking into account responses received from those contacted and any consequent further action required, that General Assembly delegate to the Nominations Committee the detailed work of populating and approving the revised General Assembly membership for report to the June 2020 General Assembly meeting.

(ii) Appointment of Pro-Chancellor

Received: a report outlining the process and timetable for appointment of the new Pro-Chancellor to replace Gillian Easson who will have served the maximum two, four year terms at the end of her current term on 31 August 2020.

Reported: that the key requirements for the role were as follows:

- Ability to act as an ambassador for the University, including capacity to promote the University regionally and nationally (and potentially internationally).
- Understanding of the higher education sector and specifically, the University and its aspirations and values.
- Ability to chair large, public meetings involving a range of stakeholders.
- Relevant experience and ability to contribute to the work of the Nominations Committee in appointing lay members of both the Board and General Assembly.
- Ability to work effectively with officers of the University, including the Chair of the Board and the President and Vice-Chancellor.

Resolved:

(1) To endorse the nominations process set out in the report (i.e to invite staff, students and alumni as well as Board and General Assembly members to submit suggestions) with nominations permitted for people with existing links or relationship with the University, or individuals with no current connection (provided they fulfil the criteria as set out above), noting that Statutes prohibit the appointment of anyone with a paid appointment at the University.

(2) The nominations process will require confirmation that individuals nominated are willing to serve if appointed, initially for a four year term as stipulated in Statutes, with the possibility of re-appointment for a second and final four year term.

(3) That the recommendation from the Nominations Committee for appointment of the new Pro-Chancellor be considered at the June 2020 meeting.

4. Membership of the General Assembly

Noted: details of current membership of the General Assembly.

5. Annual report on the work of the University

Received: The President and Vice-Chancellor, Professor Dame Nancy Rothwell, reported on the key developments over the year, making reference to the “Review of the Year” contained within the Financial Statements.

Reported:

- (1) The past year had continued to be one of change and uncertainty for the sector (e.g. industrial action, Brexit and government changes).
- (2) There were some more positive signs emerging from government, including commitment to science, research and the regions, an increase in government research and innovation funding, more positive messages on international students and staff and increased government research and innovation funding. The Minister of State for Universities, Science, Research and Innovation, Chris Skidmore was visiting the University on 17 January and there were some potential significant funding opportunities.
- (3) Performance against each of the Key Performance Indicators in the Manchester 2020 was tracked and formed part of the Stocktake Report that was in the process of being finalised and would be reported to the next Assembly meeting. Progress was generally good but in some areas (e.g. Research Income) there was scope to increase the pace of progress. In September 2019, the University had been named the University of the Year for Graduate Employment by The Times and Sunday Times Good University Guide.
- (4) There had been significant achievements by each of the five research beacons and numerous major research grants and prizes had been awarded (e.g. a £16.5 million Cancer UK Research award for new radiotherapy treatments). Nineteen staff had been elected to fellowship of learned societies and preparations were on track for submission across 29 Units of Assessment to the 2021 Research Excellence Framework exercise.
- (5) Teaching and learning and student metrics had generally shown improvement (e.g. overall National Student Survey score had increased from 83% to 84%) but there was scope for further improvement which would be facilitated through the new Institute for Teaching and Learning. The first students had now graduated from the prestigious Stellify award which included interdisciplinary learning, ethical grand challenges, volunteering and leadership.
- (6) The Greater Manchester dedicated student Mental Health Service had now begun operation. The initiative involved all Greater Manchester HEIs and the Greater Manchester Health and Social Care Partnership and during the first three months 120 referrals had been made (55% from the University).
- (7) The University’s record on social responsibility continued to be strong as demonstrated by a range of indicators, including being the best University in Europe and the third best in the world for achievement against the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.
- (8) The University’s cultural institutions continued to be successful, receiving over 1.25 million visitors per year; the Museum reimaging continued and Jodrell Bank had achieved UNESCO World Heritage Status.
- (9) Internal change had included the appointment of a new Vice-Presidents for Teaching, Learning and Students and Social Responsibility (Prof April McMahon and Prof Nalin Thakkar respectively).
- (10) Other achievements included 33rd place in the Academic Ranking of World Universities (sixth in the UK) and the Manchester Institute for Biotechnology achieving the Queen’s Anniversary Prize. The international search for a development/investment partner for the Innovation District (ID) Manchester site (at the North Campus) was now underway.
- (11) In relation to support for business, the University was the best in the UK for total collaborative research funding and for Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (the latter largely with small and medium sized enterprises). Global research income of over £40 million had been obtained and global collaborative research themes included cancer innovation, future mobility and materials.
- (12) The External Stakeholder Survey results were generally very positive (with recognition of the University’s global research profile, significant campus improvements and the University’s record

in Social Responsibility). Teaching profile continued to be an issue (with lack of understanding of initiatives like Stellify and lack of visibility of international partnerships and some Research Beacons). Whilst Graphene continued to be a differentiator, the survey indicated questions from stakeholders about what comes after it.

- (13) An independent opinion poll conducted amongst over 2,500 members of the public in summer 2019 had placed the University third (behind Oxford and Cambridge) in the ranking of the top ten UK universities.
- (14) The new vision and strategic plan, Our Future, had now been launched and members had received copies at the meeting.
- (15) In summary, the principal future opportunities and activities were: delivery on the strategic plan and vision, focus on staff development and wellbeing, innovation and international and three cross-cutting areas, Digital, Creative and Environmental Sustainability.

6. Question and Answer Session

Reported: This item provided an opportunity for members to ask questions on any aspect of the University's work. The questions and answers provided (either before or at the meeting) were made available to members in a separate report.

7. Annual Financial Statements 2018-19

Received: for information, the University's Annual Financial Statements and a presentation from the Interim Director of Finance.

Reported:

(1) The financial objectives of the University were to achieve year on year income growth, to support the strategic goals of teaching and research and social responsibility through planned and targeted expenditure, to deliver a surplus in order to fund investment (both to maintain and improve new facilities and to support new initiatives) and to prioritise and invest to further the University's strategic goals.

(2) Key highlights for year end 31 July 2019 included:

- Annual Increase of 4.4% in tuition fee income to £483.3 million
- Slight annual reduction in Home/EU tuition fee income (from £210.1 million to £208 million)
- Annual growth of 11% in income from full time overseas students to £225.3 million (this growth was primarily a result of increased postgraduate taught numbers across all three faculties)
- Slight annual reduction in part-time fee income (by 0.3% to £29 million)
- Annual 7% increase in short course fees (to £20.8 million)
- Annual 8.3% growth in research income to £323.5 million (29% of total income)
- Annual growth of 6.3% in underlying research income
- £20.4 million capital income for the Royce Institute
- Overall annual increase in capital income of £4.5 million (to £88.1 million)
- Slight annual decrease in research awards (£12.3 million or 4.6% to £255.9 million)
- Cash reserves were £203.3 million, an annual reduction of £112 million as a result in investment in the Estates Masterplan (the Manchester Engineering Campus Development (MECD) project was on track and within budget)
- Annual operating surplus of 3.7% (an annual increase of 1.4%); the new Strategic Plan targeted an increase of at least 5%
- Exceptional accounting charges as a result of Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS) developments and actuarial loss had resulted in a total comprehensive income deficit of

£110.5 million (compared to a surplus of £102 million in 2017-18); this had been an issue across the sector for institutions in membership of USS.

(3) Slides showing trends for total income for the period 2013-14 to 2019-20, the overall 2018-19 income split, staff costs as a percentage of income (slight annual increase from 54.4% to 55.7% as a result of strategic investment, pension cost commitments and Living wage employer commitments), and a breakdown of how the £9,250 undergraduate tuition fee is spent and the costs of support to the faculties.

(4) Noting that most research funders do not pay full economic costs of research, the need to continue focus on improving research cost recovery to ensure performance was at least equivalent to the University's peer group.

(5) The following ongoing risks and uncertainties:

- Pensions
- Salary growth
- Overseas student recruitment
- Potential changes in funding for home students and impact of demographic changes
- The impact of Brexit
- Difficulty in obtaining full economic cost pricing for research

(6) Measures to mitigate the above risks included:

- Focus on commercialisation , including ID Manchester and spinouts
- Business income for research
- Service redesign and remodelling
- Improvements in procurement practice and activity
- Continuing to diversify international income
- Further development of on line and blended learning
- Use of bursaries and targeted discounting
- Continued focus on research cost recovery
- Targeting growth in philanthropic income

8. Successes and Future Direction of the Faculty of Biology, Medicine and Health and Development of the Christabel Pankhurst Institute

Received: presentations from Prof Graham Lord, Vice-President and Dean of Faculty of Biology, Medicine and Health and Prof Chris Taylor, Associate Vice-President for Digital Futures (copies of slides used during the presentation were subsequently circulated to members).

9. Date of next meeting of the General Assembly

Reported: That the next meeting of the General Assembly would be held on Wednesday 17 June 2020 at 3.00pm

10. Summation and close

Reported:

The Pro-Chancellor expressed thanks to all the presenters and to the General Assembly members in attendance for the contribution they had made to the meeting.
CLOSE.