

APPROVED MINUTES

The University of Manchester

BOARD OF GOVERNORS

Wednesday 19 March 2025

Present: Philippa Hird (Chair), Prof Duncan Ivison (President and Vice-Chancellor), Ann Barnes (Deputy Chair), David Buckley, Lexie Baynes, Kerris Bright, Deirdre Evans, Prof Danielle George, Guy Grainger, Dr Reinmar Hager, Nick Hillman, Katie Jackson, Tom Jirat, Prof Paul Mativenga, Jatin Patel, Robin Phillips, Tony Raven, Prof Fiona Smyth, Paul Thwaite, Prof Soumhya Venkatesan and Emma Wade-Smith (21 members)

Apologies: Anna Dawe, Dr Hema Radhakrishnan, and Natasha Traynor (Associate Member).

In attendance: Patrick Hackett, Registrar, Secretary and Chief Operating Officer (RSCOO), Carol Prokopyszyn, Chief Financial Officer, Professor Colette Fagan, Vice-President (Research) (items 6 and 7), Dr Alison Fairclough, Head of Business Intelligence (item 6), Prof Petra Hamerlik, Chair of Translational Neuro-Oncology (item 7), Kate Cambden, Executive Director of Development and Alumni Relations (DDAR) (item 8) and Mark Rollinson (Deputy Secretary).

1. Engagement with staff and students from the Faculty of Science and Engineering (FSE)

Reported: the Chair invited members to reflect on the engagement sessions which and preceded the Board meeting and comprised round table discussions with staff and students from FSE on teaching, learning and the student experience, and a research showcase where seven Dame Kathleen Ollerenshaw (DKO) Fellows shared their research with Board members.

Noted:

(1) Comments on the five discussion groups involving staff and students from FSE included the following:

- Inconsistency of the student experience, with some examples of excellent practice, but others which fell short of expectations, including failures to act in a timely way on student feedback. The Board agreed that clear, robust processes and appropriate accountability were essential, as was sharing good practice and empowerment at a local level to effect solutions. In this context, a Senate member commented on the importance of ensuring that students understood the rationale for timescales (e.g. external moderation of assessed work to safeguard standards.)
- Inconsistency also applied to the use of Academic Advisors, where there was considerable variation in practice.
- Reported concerns about over-communication and survey fatigue. In this context, there was also comment about mode of communication and over-reliance on email.
- Implications of an overly complex curriculum which impacted on the communications issues referred to above and on workload of Professional Services staff.

- The session had been evidently student led (after a brief introduction from the Vice-President and Dean of Faculty) and this was welcomed by the Board.
 - Good examples of effective working between Professional Services and academic colleagues.
 - Praise for the effective impact of the [Peer Assisted Study Sessions](#) (PASS), small group learning sessions led and facilitated by second and third-year students from the same course.
 - Not all students involved in the session had a sense of belonging and it was important to uncover and understand the reasons for this.
 - Consistent concerns about financial issues and the cost of being a student with several students reporting working significantly long hours (in this context, there was also comment about the importance of ensuring the availability of affordable, nutritious food).
 - Praise for the work of the Careers Service, noting the potential to enhance broader employability networks.
 - Discussion about the impact of Artificial Intelligence on the student experience, including assessment.
 - The potential to enhance and further encourage interdisciplinary activity.
 - All the students involved in discussion with the Board had been a credit to the University and the Board asked for its very positive feedback on the engagement sessions to be fed back to the Faculty.
- Action: Deputy Secretary**

(2) Comments on the research showcase included the following:

- All the sessions had been highly engaging and accessible.
- The DKO Fellowships were five-year fixed term appointments and provided an excellent stepping stone to establishing an independent research career and gaining a full time permanent academic position.
- The potential to develop the commercial impact of some of the research outlined, and the importance of an enabling framework and guidance to help early career researchers navigate this space.
- Some researchers had chosen Manchester because of its breadth and scale, and there was potential to capitalise further on the University's evident strength and reputation.
- The overall impact of research activities on the University's 2038 zero carbon emission target.

2. Declarations of Interest

Noted: there were no new declarations of interest.

Reported:

(1) The new online system for declarations of interest had now launched and members would be asked to complete, with instructions provided.

(2) Recent external appointments and awards for some Board members.

3. Minutes

Agreed: the minutes of the meeting held on 19 February 2025.

4. Matters arising from the minutes

Received: an updated report on ongoing issues that had been raised at previous meetings.

Noted:

(1) Once outstanding reports arising from the Uniac procurement audit report had been received by Audit and Risk Committee (before and at its April meeting) the Board would be provided with a report setting out the circumstances which had resulted in the situation as outlined in the report and how such an eventuality could be avoided in future.

Action: RSCOO/Chief Financial Officer

(2) The request for an update on the proposed work to better understand the impact of the research environment on students on taught programmes (and potentially vice versa).

Action: Deputy Secretary (to coordinate)

(3) Further to the visit at the previous meeting, information about the ownership of the Paterson Building, including operational management responsibility and funding allocation.

(4) Attendance at School Boards had been arranged for several lay Board members and there would be a consolidated report back on experience at the July Board meeting.

Action: Deputy Secretary

5. President and Vice-Chancellor's report

Received: a report from the President and Vice-Chancellor. The report covered the following:

- Manchester 2035 and early progress on the development of transformational "leaps" (with further work and engagement planned and detailed exploration by the Board in May)
- Strategic change: lessons to learn and future approach (noting recent publication of the Student Experience Programme (SEP) review report).
- Reflections on the President and Vice-Chancellor's recent visit to China and Hong Kong and the wider international landscape
- Recent senior colleague arrivals

Reported:

(1) The report set out initial, headline thoughts emerging about the transformational "leaps" across the five domains (i.e.: i) Flexible, personalised, and digitally enabled learning, ii) Accelerating the path from research excellence to impact, iii) A powerhouse of innovation, iv) The university to partner with and v) Digital inside and out).

(2) Careful consideration was being given to future approach to defence-related research, recognising the opportunity for significant funding growth in this area, and existing research strengths and the need to approach this in a transparent and responsible way, aligned to core values.

(3) In relation to the SEP report, a series of meetings would consider how best to take forward its recommendations (including an open meeting with all staff, and a session at Senate). The full report had been made available to the Board and there would be an opportunity for further reflection at a future Board meeting. The University's approach to the governance of change was evolving, to create more agile and effective oversight, to foster greater alignment between project outcomes and the University's strategic plan and to ensure effective engagement (both formal and informal).

(4) The President and Vice-Chancellor's recent visit had highlighted the strength of the University's brand and reputation in China (especially among the elite universities,

government officials, and alumni) and the remarkable enthusiasm and engagement from Chinese and Hong Kong alumni.

Noted:

(1) Discussions about the future of defence-related research would involve researchers, funding partners and the broader University community, noting the complexity of this area, including the increasing prevalence of dual-use technologies. The Board would return to this matter at an appropriate juncture.

Action: Deputy Secretary

(2) Notwithstanding the increasingly volatile geopolitical environment, the maturing Chinese higher education system and the University's continued efforts to diversify international recruitment, China would continue to be a highly significant market for the foreseeable future. In this context, and noting the University's robust approach to due diligence, the University's reputation and partnership with prestigious Chinese universities were a distinct advantage.

(3) In response to questions, and as outlined in the President and Vice-Chancellor's report, the University's approach to major change programmes (like SEP) was evolving and several recommendations arising from the report were already being progressed. The upcoming engagement meetings would reflect on lessons learned and future approach and capability, noting the importance of highlighting examples of good practice (for example, the approach to foundational improvements in IT Services)

(4) The current uncertainties affecting universities in the United States (including significant reductions in funding at major institutions) presented opportunities for universities in the UK, including Manchester with the potential to attract research talent and students (Secretary's note: the President and Vice-Chancellor spoke on this matter on the [Radio 4 Today programme](#) later that day (42:28 to 46:57)).

(5) Deep concern at the escalating crisis in Gaza, noting the breakdown in the ceasefire: the University was continuing to engage proactively with all members of the university community impacted and was committed to open, transparent and inclusive dialogue.

6. Global Rankings

Received:

(1) Following discussion at the Board Accountability Review meeting on 20 November 2024, a slide deck on global research rankings at a [Town Hall meeting](#) for University colleagues on 22 January 2025.

(2) As requested at the most recent meeting of the Board on 19 February 2025, a summary of the University position across a range of sector rankings with relevant context and explanation (available in the Diligent Reading Room).

Reported:

(1) Whilst the University's strategy was not driven by rankings, they were critical to ensure recruitment and retention of the best global talent (both staff and students).

(2) Some international markets and scholarship funders only consider top-ranked institutions (for example, universities outside the top 100 in the QS rankings were at a disadvantage in attracting high-quality international students).

(3) A Global Rankings Taskforce had been established to consider actions to improve performance (both tactical and strategic). The initial priority was to target publication and citation-based metrics, as an area of relative underperformance, with reputation-based metrics as a second order priority.

Noted:

(1) The Global Rankings Taskforce was developing its understanding of metrics and potential actions that would move the dial significantly. In this context, there was a relative paucity of highly cited researchers in the Faculty of Biology, Medicine and Health and improvement in this area had the potential to improve institutional performance significantly (with other consequential benefits on the academic community, including attracting high quality postgraduate researchers).

(2) An approach adopted by some institutions was to target the recruitment of highly cited researchers to enable an immediate improvement in performance (noting that the alternative approach of driving institutional improvement was likely to have a longer lead time).

(3) More broadly, as the Manchester 2035 strategy developed it was essential to confirm which [indicators](#) were most important to the University and direct purposeful effort accordingly. This was under active consideration by the Executive and would be discussed further by the Board at the May 2025 strategy day.

(4) The importance of publicising and promoting awareness of good ranking performance, for example, ninth position in the [QS World Rankings for Sustainability](#) and top 25 performance in [specific subject areas](#).

7. Research Presentation

Received: a presentation from Professor Petra Hamerlik, Chair of Translational Neuro-Oncology on ongoing research into brain cancer and approaches to enable more effective early detection (via tear-fluid biomarkers) and consequent improvements in outcome. The Board thanked Prof Hamerlik for the presentation and the groundbreaking and life changing work it highlighted.

8. Campaign Briefing and Update

Received: a presentation on the University Campaign, scheduled to enter its public phase in autumn 2025.

Reported:

(1) The Campaign was designed to support and enhance the University's strategy, contribute to institutional financial sustainability and to provide an agile income stream that enabled University leadership to deliver the margin for excellence required to compete with world ranking universities, by providing headroom to invest.

(2) Ensuring optimal intersection between the needs and aspirations of potential donors and the University's strategic ambitions and requirements was key to a successful campaign.

(3) By the conclusion of the campaign, it was intended to realise annual income streams of c£40 million (at least doubling current support) and for Manchester to become a destination for multi-million-pound gifts. The President and Vice-Chancellor had experience of enhancing the scale of fundraising ambition, via a highly successful campaign at the University of Sydney

(4) The Campaign would aim to mobilise the power of the whole institution (including the Students' Union) to generate positive impact on students and the region through volunteering and community giving.

(5) The quiet phase of the Campaign which was now nearing conclusion had enabled the establishment of effective systems and governance and the expansion and enhancement of capability of the core team.

Noted:

(1) Whilst all donations were tracked to ensure intended and optimal use, this was not always readily apparent in the reporting mechanisms used in the published Financial Statements. There was ongoing discussion between the Executive Director of DDAR and the Chief Financial Officer to ensure clearer future visibility for the Board.

(2) The public phase of the Campaign would be launched at the same time as the Manchester 2035 Strategy enabling clear alignment between the strategy and philanthropic investment.

(3) The importance of focusing on both the alumni and non-alumni community as potential sources of philanthropy.

9. Student context- Key issues for the student experience

Received: the latest student context report from the two student Board members.

Noted:

(1) Both the student members' report and the Board's earlier engagement with students from FSE had emphasised financial and cost of study issues, and the report highlighted concerns about the cost of rent at the new Fallowfield development.

(2) Finance Committee would carry out a deep dive into pricing and affordability of accommodation noting the widening gap between the amount of the maintenance loan and average rent prices and informed by the extent of the University's current bursary offer.

Action: Deputy Secretary/Governance Office to coordinate

(3) The need to pursue measures to influence national policy in relation to student maintenance alongside a local approach (which included pricing and bursary offer).

(4) As noted in the FSE engagement session, continued concerns about the efficacy and consistency of student communication: addressing this was essential to enhance the student experience.

9. Nominations and Governance Committee (5 March 2024)

Received: the report of the meeting of Nominations and Governance Committee held on 5 March 2025.

Agreed:

(1) The following reappointments to the Board:

- i. David Buckley for a further three years until August 2028
- ii. Anna Dawe for a further three years until August 2028
- iii. Deirdre Evans for a further two years until August 2027
- iv. Natasha Traynor for a further year as an Associate Member until August 2026

(2) The proposal to merge the current People and Remuneration Committees with effect from 2025-26 with terms of reference and membership as set out in the report.

(3) The proposal that all members should have full membership rights on the merged committee and attend for all business (on the explicit understanding of the strict confidentiality of the remuneration elements of the committee's business, with an absolute prohibition on disclosure outside the committee) and that before the merged committee met for the first time a workshop be held to confirm its modus operandi (this arrangement would be subject to review after one year of operation).

(4) The following appointments to current committee vacancies, noting that consideration of vacancies created by retiring members would take place at the May meeting:

- i. Emma Wade-Smith to Nominations and Governance Committee
- ii. Kerris Bright and Emma Wade-Smith to Awards and Honours Group
- iii. Anna Dawe to General Assembly

10. Senate

Received: a report from the meeting of Senate held on 12 February 2025, which included the updated Intellectual Property (IP) Policy, recommended for approval to the Board.

Noted:

(1) Future iterations (or potentially supplementary guidance) could expand on database rights and ownership as this was likely to become a bigger issue in future.

(2) Appeals would be allocated on a case-by-case basis, depending on issues raised and that such instances were expected to be rare.

(3) As noted in the Senate report, there was future scope to review the ownership of teaching materials to bring the position more in line with the policy position on the ownership of scholarly materials.

(4) The list of authorisers in the Policy Appendix should be reviewed to ensure that it was fully comprehensive.

(5) The Annual Report of Student Academic Appeals, Student Complaints, and Student Conduct and Discipline Cases 2023-24

Agreed: subject to resolution of the query raised in (4) above and the correction of a minor typo, the IP Policy be approved.

11. University Executive

Noted: the report from the meetings of University Executive held between 11 February and 4 March 2025.

12. Chair's Report

Received: the Chair's report, including the latest Board forward look.

13. Secretary's report

Received: the report on Exercise of Delegations covering the recent appointment of a Head of School, the use of the Seal and appointment of Emeritus Professors.

14. Any other business

Noted: there was no other business.

15. Dates of meetings in 2024-25

Noted: dates of remaining meetings in 2024-25 as below: (unless stated, meetings will start at midday and some meetings will be followed by a working supper which should be finished by c7.45pm (all meetings in person)).

- Wednesday 21 May 2025 (Board Strategy Day: all day, from 9am)
- Thursday 22 May 2025 (meeting 9am-12pm)
- Wednesday 23 July 2025