

HARPER ADAMS UNIVERSITY

Board of Governors

Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Governors held on 27 September 2019 in the Boardroom

Present: Mr Mike Lewis Chair
Dr David Llewellyn Vice-Chancellor
Mr Vernon Blakeman Staff Governor
Mr Tim Burnhope
Mr Peter Cowdy
Dr John Donaldson Staff Governor
Mrs Emma Foulkes
Mrs Sarah Mukherjee
Mr Peter Nixon Vice-Chair
Mr Daniel Jervis SU President
Prof Mark Ormerod
Rebecca Payne Staff Governor
Dr Julia Pointon
Mrs Christine Snell
Dr Martin Thomas
Mr Campbell Tweed
Mr Stephen Vickers Vice-Chair
Mrs Debbie Winstanley
Dr Tim Watson
Mr Dominic Wong

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Apologies: Mr Colin Bailey
Mr Richard Hambleton

In attendance: Dr Catherine Baxter University Secretary & Clerk to the Board
Mrs Liz Furey Director of Finance
Prof Peter Mills Deputy Vice-Chancellor

Register of Interests

Members were reminded to complete or update their entry in the Register of Interests as necessary.

19/01 Welcome to New Members and Staff Observers

- Welcomed:
- i) Adeola Olufayo and Marisa Virseda, members of the Board Apprentice Programme (External Observers)
 - ii) Sarah Mukherjee, Independent Board member, to her first meeting and Mr Vernon Blakeman, Support Staff Governor, to his first meeting.
 - iii) David Edwards, University Solicitor, Staff Observer

Mr Nixon, Mr Vickers and Mr Wong left the meeting during consideration of the next item

- Noted:
- i) that three expressions of interest in the roles of Chair and Vice-Chairs had been received as previously notified to members. Mr Nixon was willing to be nominated for the role of Chair and Messrs Vickers and Wong for the roles of Vice-Chair;

- Agreed:
- i) to appoint Mr Nixon to the role of Chair with effect from 27 November

2019. In the period to this date, Mr Lewis and Mr Nixon would ensure an appropriate handover was progressed;

- ii) to appoint Mr Vickers & Mr Wong to the roles of Vice-Chair with immediate effect;

Mr Nixon, Mr Vickers & Mr Wong re-joined the meeting at this point

- iii) to offer the Boards' thanks to Mrs Lavinia Moroz-Hale for her contribution to the work of the Board during her period of office as a Staff Governor; **CEB**

19/02 **Briefing from Undergraduate Students**

Received: a briefing by two undergraduate students on their placement experiences followed by discussion with members of the Board. (Please see copies of presentations uploaded to the Governors' Document Library

Agreed: to thank the students for their high quality and inspirational presentations **CEB**

19/03 **Minutes and Notes of the 2019 Effectiveness Review Workshop**

Approved:

- i) the minutes of the meeting of the Board of Governors held on 4 July (18/71-18/85)
- ii) the notes of the Effectiveness Review Workshop held on 4 July 2019 including the Action Plan arising from the Workshop

19/04 **Matters Arising**

Received: a report from the University Secretary;

Noted:

- i) that the Chair of the Board had been involved in the appointment of Ms Grover as a new member of the Senior Management Team in the role of Director of Marketing & Communications;
- ii) that the on-line platform to facilitate Board discussion of the draft Strategic Plan over the summer period had worked effectively and would be used to continue the debate and facilitate other exchanges between members in the future as appropriate;
- iii) that the Vice-Chancellor had acted on the delegated authority of the Board to approve changes to the Academic Quality manual;
- iv) that further minor changes to the Student Disciplinary Policy arising from recent OIA guidance aimed at ensuring the role of the OIA is further highlighted by all universities in such procedures were required;

Agreed:

- i) to endorse the Chair's action to appoint Ms Grover and the Vice-Chancellors' action in approving changes to the Academic Quality Manual;
- ii) that the Chair and Mr Thomas may act on behalf of the Board to agree any future minor changes to the Student Disciplinary Policy to reflect OIA requirements; **MJL/MT**

19/05 **Terms of Reference**

Received: the Terms of Reference of the Board of Governors' for 2019/20;

Agreed: that the Terms of Reference remained appropriate and no changes were required for 2019/20.

19/06 **Vice-Chancellor's Report**

Received:

- i) a report from the Vice -Chancellor on recent developments of note;
- ii) a report from the Acting Director of Marketing & Communications;
- iii) a mapping of how Harper Adams University meets the OfS Public interest Governance Principles Guidance (June 2019) on A&P Plans.

Noted:

- i) that at the current date, 653 new undergraduate enrolments had been completed compared to 603 in 2018. Taught postgraduate numbers were 138 compared to 144 in 2018 and 114 in 2017. In 2019 the fee waiver arrangements for TPG programmes had ceased to be offered which may account for the significant reduction. A further cohort of c. 7 Postgraduate Vet Physiotherapy was also expected. Overseas student numbers had increased, but EU National enrolments were down slightly by 3. The University had also secured 36 apprentices. Overall the picture was positive. It was recognised that retention remains vital;
- ii) that the University's' Access & Participation Plan was one of 41 agreed in the first cohort due to the need to have an APP in place when Veterinary Medicine students are applying for 2020. Of the 41 APPs approved, 31 had enhanced monitoring requirements, including Harper Adams. The actions required had been shared and agreed with relevant staff. Progress would be monitored and reported to the Board. This would be covered later in the agenda during the briefing from Dr Hind. Thanks were due to the Chair for acting on behalf of the Board to agree the final version of the plan. Members were reminded that the plan is available in the Governors' Document Library;
- iii) that one of the actions required by HAU was to put forward suggestions on better measures of rural deprivation. As Landex were also exercised about this, a dialogue would take place to try and co-ordinate this work and ensure consistency where possible; **DGL**
- iv) that although HAUs' APP had been agreed for 5 years, in the last few days further data had been released by OfS and more was likely to emerge. This may lead to a need to further shape institutional access and participation plans. Initial views were that the new 'TUNDRA' data might be a better fit for HAU needs than the previous 'POLAR' data. (Definitions: TUNDRA - Tracking Under Representation by Area. POLAR – Participation of Local Areas);
- v) that the refocused 'Welcome Week' appeared to be positive. The Students' Union had created a new range of activities designed to appeal to a wider range of new students. The University had attracted some commuter students and a slight increase in mature student including former military personnel. The University's' engagement with the Armed Forces Covenant may have assisted by raising its profile amongst service leavers;
- vi) that engagement with induction led by staff was generally very good with 75% of students actively participating. The newly appointed Conduct Officer was also proving to be a useful addition to the team. Engagement with the SU programme had been positive overall although some students had commented that they would have

preferred a fuller week with no or fewer evenings/quieter events. This contrasted with feedback in 2018. The SU would engage with feedback and review its plans for 2020 and an overall review of Welcome Week would also take place;

- vii) that UUK had published guidance on 'initiations' by student clubs. HAUSU was clear it does not permit its clubs and societies to undertake such activities. The SU will be engaging with all clubs and societies and training their Executive Teams;
- viii) that the Vice-Chancellor had attended an HE event at the Conservative Party Conference and would attend similar events at other conferences as they arise;
- ix) that a close watch on possible risks relating to Brexit was in place drawing on UUK & DfE guidance as well as wider UK government advice and information provided by key suppliers e.g. of catering. The University had done its best to mitigate known risks to date;
- x) that the review of HE Innovation Funding (HEIF) is in hand. A £10m national competition fund to look at how students contribute to HEIF is being offered. A commitment to increase research funding by 2.4% has been made. Opportunities for small specialist HEIs to access some of this funding has been highlighted as an important factor;
- xi) that UKRI will have a change of CEO during 2020;
- xii) that the Home Office is making some changes to student visas to allow overseas students to remain in the UK to work for a period after graduation. Interest from contacts in India had already grown in response to this new approach;
- xiii) that the Student Loan Company is reviewing its financial model and may set up an administration fee, GuildHE are reviewing all subscription rates pre- & post OfS as it is anticipated that HEIs are now funding significantly higher fees to support the OfS and other new subscriptions previously funded by government;
- xiv) that the next round of Institutional Specific Funding (ISF) may be launched during October 2019. It is anticipated that competition will be increased for the available funds. Details of the fund value and requirements for applicants are not yet available, but demonstration of 'World Class Teaching' is likely to remain as an important feature;
- xi) that a post qualifications admissions review is in hand together with further reviews of conditional/unconditional offer making; further work on longitudinal employment data (LEO) including a possible regional weighting; a review of degree standards and a review of level 4/5 provision;
- xvi) that the University has been shortlisted for University of the Year in the THE awards and was delighted to be named as Modern University of the Year by the Sunday Times Good University Guide and runner up to St Andrews for University of the Year. This is the first time a post 1992 HEI has been featured in the top 20 UK universities in this table. Members offered their formal congratulations to all staff and students on this important achievement. A celebration would take place later in the day to which all Board members were invited;
- xvii) that the University was not in a position to offer a monetary award to staff to recognise their hard work and commitment, however, it was

proposed that 23 & 24 December 2019 be designated as 'thank you additional closure one off and exceptional days by the Board to recognise the significant achievements demonstrated in 2019:

- xviii) that subject level TEF was not yet fully in place as the outcome of the Pearce Review was awaited. However, it appeared likely that there would be subject level assessment in 2021;
- xix) that the need to continue to attract and retain good quality staff remained a key priority. This was a risk included in the Risk Analysis & Action Plan which was monitored by the Staffing Committee and this would continue;
- xx) that the 2019 Graduation had seen the largest ever cohort of students graduate and thanks were due to all for making the event a success;
- xxi) that Ms Saffron Grover would be joining the Board for its Strategic Planning Session later in the day and would take up her full-time role on 7 October 2019;
- xxii) that a decision to retain the school focused element of Field to Fork had been made, but not to run the Saturday general public day. This would be reviewed for 2021;
- xxiii) that the Marketing and Communications Report was helpful. No questions were raised on this occasion;
- xxiv) that the Academic Registrar & Director of Academic Services would join members towards the end of the meeting to brief members on the Access & Participation Plan and in particular, how the Board would be informed and assured about progress made towards meeting targets set in the APP;

Agreed: that the Board wished to award on a one-off exceptional basis, two extra closure days (23 & 24 December 2019) as 'thank you' days to recognise the excellent overall performance of the University as demonstrated in the Sunday Times Good University Guide and other national awards. **DGL**

19/07 Members Discussion

- Received:
- i) annual report for the Chair on one to one discussions 2019 with members and an aide-mémoire setting out lead governor roles;
 - ii) a copy of the refreshed International Strategy and for reference a copy of the progress report on actions from the current International Strategy presented to the Board in April 2019;

Agreed: that the Chair would feedback on one to one discussions at the Planning Day and that the International Strategy would be an item at the next meeting of the Board in November 2019. **MJL/CEB**

19/08 Finance & Planning

- Received:
- i) an oral briefing from the Chief Financial Officer on progress with the preparation of the annual accounts and financial statements and engagement with external auditors;
 - ii) a progress report on the Corporate Planning Statement (CPS);

- Noted:
- i) that the preparations for year end were progressing as expected with no significant issues raised at this point in the audit process;
 - ii) that members were content with progress made to date with respect to CPS actions;

19/09 Strategic Topics

Professor Ormerod was not present for discussion of this item

Received: a commercial in confidence report from the Deputy Vice-Chancellor on the Veterinary School Project with Keele University [Please see separate Commercial in Confidence Minutes]

Professor Ormerod re-joined the Board at this point

19/10 Academic Board & Academic Developments for consideration by the Board of Governors of annual reports on Academic Quality matters

Received: a briefing note on annual reports covering the arrangements for assuring academic quality at Harper Adams University

Agreed: to note the report and that members had no issues to raise

19/11 Report of the President of the Students' Union

Received: a report from the President of the Students Union

- Noted:
- i) that the President had found his engagement with a range of training over the summer very useful, including his attendance at the AdvanceHE training event for new Student Governors;
 - ii) that the SU continued its work to enhance its governance arrangements including induction and the appointment of new Trustees;
 - iii) that the SU hoped to make better use of the bar extension by adding soft furnishings in the style of a relaxing/common room space;
 - iv) that the SU Trustees had agreed the years budget and an updated risk register;
 - v) that a new Societies Committee and a Sports Committee together with an SU Council were in hand to improve student representation and opportunities to influence SU decision making. The SU was also supporting the University's activities to induct and support student representatives as it recognised feedback and this aspect of its work in the NSS was not as positive as it could be;
 - vi) that year end was progressing with final accounts being prepared in time for presentation to the SU Trustee Board & to the Board of Governors in November 2019. The likely out-turn was a modest deficit which was less than the budgeted deficit. Financial controls were being reviewed and strengthened;
 - vii) that the new Freshers Festival had been well attended overall with high wristband sales before arrival and on arrival at the University. Feedback from students would be used to inform plans for 2020;

- viii) that the SU had offered a much wider range of activities to appeal to as many students as possible with a view to helping new students to settle in and make friends;

Agreed: to welcome the report and to encourage the SU to continue offering a wide range of activities for all students and to continue its aim to engage with student representation.

19/12 Prevent

- Received:
- i) the annual report on the University's compliance with the Prevent Duty including approval of the annual return, assurance statement and data submission too the Office for Students (OfS)
 - ii) an oral report on the positive outcome from the Prevent Review Meeting. A confidential report from the OfS was also noted.

- Noted:
- i) that the University continued to engage proactively with the Prevent Duty;
 - ii) that the creation of a Prevent Group to formalise previous interactions between key stakeholders was useful and had proved to be effective. The group would meet at least twice a year as a minimum to review the Risk Analysis Action Plan with regard to Prevent and to review other policies and procedures and share best practice. Should a need arise to meet more frequently, the necessary arrangements would be made.

Agreed: that the report demonstrated appropriate due regard for the Prevent Duty such that the Board was assured that the Chair could act on behalf of the Board to sign the required statement for submission to the OfS for the period to 31 July 2019. **MJL/CEB**

19/13 Harper Adams University Development Trust

Noted: a report of the meeting of the Trust held on 9 July 2019

Agreed: as noted above, a proposal to name part of the Vet School building as Harper Adams to reflect the donation made by the Trust. **CEB**

19/14 Date of Next Meeting

Wednesday 27 November 2019

19/15 Risk Management

Noted: an updated report from the University Secretary on the key risk areas monitored by the Board of Governors

19/16 Management Accounts

Noted: the draft management accounts report for the period to 31 July 2019

19/17 OfS & Other Circulars

Noted: a summary list of OfS and other circulars received by the University since the last meeting of the Board

19/18 Briefing on the University's Access & Participation Plan

Welcomed: Dr Abigail Hind to the meeting;

- Noted:
- i) the briefing document included in the agenda papers together with the full APP (published for members on the Governors' Document Library)
 - ii) that the APP was also published on the University's website and on the OfS portal;
 - iii) that the APP was based on a very extensive data set provided by the OfS which included items such as continuation rates, degree outcomes and the postcodes associated with students studying at the University together with a wide range of other characteristics;
 - iv) that 10 key targets had been identified which would be aligned to the Boards' KPIs for reporting in November each year. The Vice-Chancellors' report would also now include a specific section on APP in which DR Hind, the Director of Learning & Teaching and the Director of Marketing & Communications would report on progress made towards reaching the targets for which they have lead responsibility;
 - v) that out of the 41 HEIs who have submitted their 2020-2025 APP, 31 have been required to undertake further actions under enhanced monitoring including Harper Adams. The areas for enhanced monitoring at Harper Adams included a request for the University to propose a better way to measure rural deprivation/ participation rates as current measures tended to be rather 'urban centric'. Other areas reflected actions the University itself had already included in its plan. The timing for this monitoring was being checked as it had been suggested as 2020, yet the 2019/20 plan remained extant so the OfS had been asked to clarify the requirements.
 - vi) that OfS had recently published a new experimental data set to inform its strategic thinking on APPs;
 - vii) the key focus remained to increase enrolments for postcodes with lower participation in HE, and for students whose characteristics reflect the index of multiple deprivation, enrolments by BAME groups and ensuring further outreach engagement and supporting schools located in under represented communities with their students' progression rates to HE;
 - viii) the need to attract further mature students was another focus;
 - ix) there was a very minor underperformance by disabled students in deprived areas and the University planned to aim for parity;
 - x) male students from socially deprived backgrounds also tended not to perform so well as other students and this was also being reviewed to ensure positive action can be put in place;
 - xi) that in November, the usual report on Key Student Indicators will be supported by a further report on Student Outcomes by Characteristics;
 - xii) a new student access panel had been created to help inform the University's plans and actions;
 - xiii) the Success and Retention Plan continues to support the APP and will be

clearly linked;

- xiv) the work on the Development Trust will continue to be reported to the Board and will include an analysis of Characteristics of Students to support the APP; **CEB/AMH**

Agreed: that the University has set appropriate and challenging targets which are welcomed by the Board.

19/19 **Date of next meeting**
27 November 2019