



BOARD OF GOVERNORS

Minutes of the meeting held on the 23rd November 2009

09/13 Attendance

13.1. Present

Mr J Pallett	Chair
Mr D Antell	
Dr H Barrett	
Mr J Bateman	
Professor M Clarke	
Mr M Collins	
Mr A Duncan	
Ms F Fairhurst	
Professor D Green	Vice Chancellor
Professor J Low	
Mr M Newitt	
Mr T Patrickson	
Mr L Probert	
Mrs J Quallington	
Mrs E Spalding	
Mrs J Swan	
Mr P Swinburn	
Mr P West	

13.2 In Attendance

Dr M Doughty	Pro Vice Chancellor (Resources)
Mrs P Finch	Director of Finance
Professor G Elliott	Director of Regional Engagement
Mrs A Hannaford	Director of Information & Learning Services
Ms H Johnstone	Assistant to the Registrar & Secretary
Mr J Ryan	Registrar & Secretary
Ms G Slater	Director of Personnel
Dr M Stowell	Director of Quality & Educational Development

13.3. Apologies

Ms J Bruce	
Professor T Thompson	
Professor R Foskett	Deputy Vice Chancellor

13.4 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

13.5. Papers to be received without discussion

Members requested that paper BG09/21 Report from Academic Board be discussed.

09/14 Minutes

14.1. The minutes of the meeting held on the 5th October 2009 [BG09/11] were confirmed as a correct record.

14.2. Matters arising not covered elsewhere on the Agenda

14.2.1 Student Recruitment [minute 09/05 refers]

The Registrar reported that with the revised baseline and additional student numbers the University's new HEFCE target was 4089. All indicators are that the University will have recruited in excess of this even after taking into account the higher non-completion forecast.

UCAS data shows that at present applications to the University for 2010/11 are 50% higher than at the same time last year.

09/15 Briefing on Graduate Intern Scheme

15.1. The Director of Regional Engagement delivered a briefing to the Board on the University's Graduate Intern Scheme. The Scheme had been introduced in response to the current economic situation which had resulted in graduates struggling to find jobs. Unlike other graduate intern schemes where graduates are volunteers, the University's scheme pays the interns and also provides an opportunity for them to continue their studies at postgraduate level.

15.2. The University received £128,000 funding from HEFCE's Economic Challenge Investment Fund which has covered the set up costs and funded bursaries for the interns. The Scheme's target was to place 50 interns in positions in Herefordshire and Worcestershire. To date 47 interns have been placed, including 16 at the University. There are a further 6 live outstanding vacancies to be filled. The job roles are in both the private and public sector and in large and small firms. All the roles are of graduate level and are available for any new graduate who normally resides in Herefordshire and Worcestershire.

15.3. To date 136 companies have expressed an interest in the scheme and 112 have been followed up. Initially a telesales firm was used to cold call companies and the leads have been followed up by members of staff in the Business Development Office. The scheme is also benefiting the University by bringing it in to contact with a wide range of new companies, including organisations which had previously not considered the benefit of employing a graduate. Employers are required to provide mentoring for the intern and receive support from the University in fulfilling this role. Involvement in the scheme also allows employers to demonstrate corporate responsibility in terms of education and training.

15.4. The University's scheme has been well received and endorsed by the CBI, TUC, local ministers and Lord Mandelson, Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills.

- 15.5. The Scheme will be evaluated in the New Year. It is unlikely that the University will receive funding from HEFCE next year but it is anticipated that the publicity the Scheme has generated will allow the University to roll out an attractive scheme for 2010/11 but without the bursary offer. There is already a long waiting list of companies willing to offer a graduate intern in 2010/11 and some of this year's employers would like to offer another internship next year.
- 15.6. Members noted that through the scheme the University was building relationships with new organisations and in some cases this would be beneficial to the University in the future in terms of knowledge transfer activities. Members noted that at present no third sector organisations were involved in the scheme but this may be due to limited funding.
- 15.7. The Board thanked the Director of Regional Engagement for the briefing and congratulated all involved on the pioneering nature of the scheme.

09/16 Chair's Business

- 16.1. The Chair thanked all those involved with the award ceremonies and Graduation Dinner for organising what had been extremely successful events.

09/17 Vice Chancellor's Report [BG09/12]

The Vice Chancellor presented his report and drew members' attention to the following:

- 17.1. The University has been awarded a gold award in the 'Green Apple Awards for Environmental Best Practice' for its work, in conjunction with Worcester City Council, on promoting recycling in students halls of residence. Over recent years the University has moved from the lowest quartile in environmental league tables to the top twenty nationally.
- 17.2. The first Worcester lecture, organised jointly between the University of Worcester and Worcester Cathedral will be held on the 4th February and the speaker will be Dame Anne Owers, HM Chief Inspector of Police.
- 17.3. A national review of higher education fees and finance has been announced. The remit of the group is broader than originally anticipated and will include reviewing financial support for part time students. There has been increased press interest in student finance, firstly due to the recent problems with the Student Loans Company and secondly due to the reported increase in the number of students using money lending services. A wider discussion around student finance will be scheduled for the next meeting of the Board.

Members queried whether there was anything the University could do to warn students about the danger of becoming involved with the money lending services. It was noted that a warning had been emailed to students and the University's own loan facilities were being promoted. It was reported that when students attend the Citizens Advice Bureau about debt they often haven't spoken to the University's financial advisers as they don't want the University to know they have financial problems and this is something that needs to be addressed.

- 17.4. As at the 23rd November the University has received 2291 applications through UCAS for 2010 entry. Six years ago the total number of applications for the year was 4000. Attendance at Open Days has also increased by on average 50%.

17.5 The Board received the Vice Chancellor's report.

09/18 Financial Matters

18.1 Annual Accounts for 2008/09 and Management Letter [BG09/13]

18.1.1 The Director of Finance presented the Annual Accounts for 2008/09 and advised the Board that both the Audit Committee and Finance & Development Committee had considered the accounts in detail and transmitted them to the Board for approval. Members noted that the Committees had provided reports on their consideration of the accounts. The Board was pleased to note that the accounts showed a surplus of £1,784,000.

18.1.2 Members noted the Management Letter from PricewaterhouseCoopers and were pleased that it supplied an unqualified opinion on the accounts.

18.1.3. On behalf of the Board, the Chair thanked the Director of Finance and her team for an excellent set of accounts.

18.1.4. The Board approved the accounts and requested that they be transmitted to HEFCE as part of the annual return.

18.2 UW Development Ltd Annual Accounts 2008/09 [BG09/14]

18.2.1. The Director of Finance advised that the UW Development Ltd accounts were part of the University's consolidated group accounts.

18.2.2. The Finance & Development Committee had considered the company's accounts and noted the unqualified audit opinion.

18.2.3. The Board approved the accounts.

18.3 Five Year Financial Forecasts [BG09/15]

18.3.1. The Director of Finance presented the Five Year Financial Forecasts and advised that they had previously been considered by the Finance & Development Committee.

18.3.2. It was acknowledged that it was difficult to predict five years ahead and therefore some of the forecasts were based on assumptions. In the fifth year it has been assumed that tuition fees will have risen to £5000 since there appears to be some political drive behind this move.

18.3.3. Members noted that the forecasts assumed that international student numbers would increase by 15% annually and queried whether this was achievable. It was noted that at present the numbers of students involved were small and the estimated growth is based on current trends.

18.3.4. Members asked for clarification over 'other' income. The Director of Finance advised that this related to summer schools, summer lettings and consultancy. An increase has been predicted due to the increase in the number of rooms available. Income arising from the commercial division of NPARU will also be included under 'other' income. The predicted income level identified for research activities was based on previous years and was fairly conservative although it was anticipated that the actual income level would exceed the forecasts.

- 18.3.5. Members queried the level of income forecast against 'endowment and investment income' stating that £50k seemed very low. It was noted that the figure included in the forecasts related to the interest figure on the endowment fund.
- 18.3.6. The Board received and approved the Five Year Financial Forecasts for onward transmission to HEFCE.
- 18.4 Updated Budget for 2009/10 [BG09/16]
- 18.4.1. The Director of Finance presented the updated budget and advised that it showed a surplus of £795,000 prior to the release from the revaluation reserve. A contingency provision for FRS17 of £1,500,000 had been included in the figures.
- 18.4.2. The University's recruitment for the year has been exceptional and consequently an additional £760,000 income from tuition fees has been incorporated into the revised budget.
- 18.4.3. Some members queried whether the predicted surplus was challenging enough. The Board was advised that whilst HEFCE expected institutions to aim for a 3% surplus, the University's primary concern was to balance the budget and to ensure there were sufficient funds to continue investment in the estate. Members were advised that as of July 2009 the University's fixed assets had increased by £40m with the completion of the various capital developments.
- 18.4.4 The Board received the updated budget for 2009/10.

09/19 Students Union [BG09/17]

The President of the Students' Union presented the report and drew members' attention to the following:-

- 19.1 The date for Students' Unions to start applying for registered charity status has been put back to the beginning of 2010. The Students' Union is continuing to prepare for the application and will be looking to appoint external trustees and student trustees.
- 19.2 Interviews for the General Manager post will be held on the 4th December.
- 19.3 The Students' Union will be making a capital bid to the University for the re-development of the building to fulfil the Union's objectives to improve social space and to make the welfare and representation side of the Union's work more visible.
- Members observed that the Students' Union facilities had not been expanded for some years despite the large increase in student numbers. The need for social space had been identified on a number of occasions over the last year including at the special governors' meeting.
- 19.4 Overall sports clubs and societies are doing well. The annual sports tour will be to Rimini, Italy in April with over 150 sports students already signed up. The LOCO Show Co pantomime will be Aladdin this year and tickets will be made available to the local community. It was noted that the Students' Union plan to have an "At home" event in the spring when members of the community will be invited to see what the Union does.
- 19.5 The Vice President – Education and Welfare reported that he had met with the Deputy Vice Chancellor and Director of Quality and Educational Development to identify ways of improving

the course representative scheme and these will be fed into the Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Committee. Three welfare campaigns have been held in the Students' Union – “Healthy Eating”, “Safe Drinking”, and “Stop Smoking”, all of which had been well attended by students.

19.6 The Board received the report.

09/20 Reports from Committees

20.1 Finance & Development Committee [BG09/18]

20.1.1. The Board received the report noting that the Committee's report on the Annual Accounts, Five Year Financial Forecasts and Revised Budget had been taken into account earlier in the meeting.

20.2 Audit Committee [BG09/19]

20.2.1. The Chair of the Audit Committee presented the Committee's Annual Report to the Board. Members noted that the Committee was of the opinion that the Board should have confidence in the adequacy and effectiveness of the risk management, control and governance in place in the University. There was also evidence that there are proper arrangements in place for the promotion of economy, efficiency and effectiveness. The Committee is also of the opinion that the management, control and quality assurance of data provided to public bodies is adequate.

20.2.2 The Board noted the opinion of the Audit Committee and approved the Annual report for onward transmission to HEFCE as part of the annual return.

20.2.3. The Chair thanked the Chair of the Audit Committee for the Committee's work over the last year.

20.3 Personnel Committee [BG09/20]

20.3.1. The Board received the report of the Personnel Committee and noted that Appendix 2, Staff Development Framework, would be circulated to members as soon as possible.

20.4 Academic Board [BG09/21]

20.4.1. Members queried the deterioration in the University's performance in the National Student Survey. It was noted that this was the first year the institution's position had slipped and that the reduction in score was variable across subjects. All departments have been advised to look at their scores and to put in place action plans to address issues raised.

20.4.2. It was also noted that the Vice Chancellor had convened a Student Experience Task & Finish Group, chaired by the Registrar and Secretary. The group had identified 6 work streams including feedback, transitions and communication and work is underway to identify fundamental actions which can be put in place across the University. The outcomes of the group's work will be reported at a Staff Conference on the 26th January to which the members of the Board will be invited.

20.4.3. The Registrar reported that the approach to personal tutoring/development planning varied across the institutes. Work is underway to identify those students at risk as soon as possible.

With the new submission scanning as soon as a student fails to submit a piece of work the tutor is emailed and advised that early intervention is needed.

20.4.4. Mr Newitt, the Board's observer on Academic Board, advised that his experience of Academic Board was that all staff see it as essential to address retention and the student experience.

20.4.5. Members queried whether applicants were given sufficient advice about attending University and what to expect. It was noted that part of the Open Day message was that applicants had to make an important choice and University might not be right for everyone. The University also provided pre-entry advice and guidance.

20.4.6. It was noted that many institutions' scores were low in terms of feedback and there was a feeling that students do not always identify the feedback they receive as feedback. The Director of Quality and Educational Development reported that a group was looking into this issue and a number of suggestions were being formulated to assist staff with making feedback more explicit. The Registrar reported that consideration was being given to running a student survey similar to the National Student Survey for students in years 1 and 2 to help identify areas of student concern. There will also be initiatives to highlight to students what actions have been carried out as a result of their feedback.

20.4.7 The Chair advised the Board that further reports will be made to the Board in future about actions being implemented. Members suggested that a special meeting of the Board should be organised to discuss these concerns.

20.4.8 The Board received the report.

09/21 HEFCE Assurance Review

21.1 The Registrar reported that the initial feedback received from HEFCE indicated that the University would be awarded the highest level of assurance and that HEFCE could place reliance on its arrangements for governance and internal control.

21.2 The Registrar thanked the Chair and Chair of the Audit Committee for meeting with the HEFCE reviewer.

09/22 Any Other Business

22.1 The Chair, on behalf of the Board, congratulated Dr Barrett on her Teaching Fellowship.

09/23 Date of Next Meeting

23.1 Monday 22nd March 2010

..... (Chair)

..... (Date)