



University Executive Board

Minutes of the meeting of 3 October 2023

- Present:** Professor Shearer West (Vice-Chancellor), Dr Paul Greatrix (Registrar), Professor Jeremy Gregory (FPVC Arts and interim FPVC Social Sciences), David Hill (CDO), Jaspal Kaur (Director of Human Resources), Professor Sam Kingman (FPVC Engineering), Professor Katherine Linehan (PVC EDI and People), Professor Sarah Metcalfe (Provost UNM) via Teams, Professor Nick Miles (Provost UNNC) via Teams, Professor Robert Mokaya (PVC GE), Margaret Monckton (CFO), Professor Jane Norman (DVC), Professor Clive Roberts (FPVC MHS), Professor Tom Rodden (PVC RKE), Professor Sarah Speight (PVC ESE), Professor Zoe Wilson (FPVC Science)
- Attending:** Rowena Hall (Secretary), Rav Kalsi (Principal Executive Officer), Sonya Stone (Faculty Director of Degree Apprenticeships MHS), James Birkett (Registrar UNNC), Mark Barber (Programme Director) for minute 23.99, Sally Blackamore (Financial Controller) for minutes 23.99 to 23.101.
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23.94 Welcome, Apologies, Quoracy and Declarations of Interest

- .1 The Chair welcomed Professor Tom Rodden to his first meeting of UEB following the commencement of his role as PVC RKE. James Birkett (Registrar UNNC) and Dr Sonya Stone (Faculty Director of Degree Apprenticeships MHS) were welcomed to the meeting as observers.
- .2 It was NOTED that the meeting was the last for Professor Clive Roberts in his role as Interim FPVC MHS. On behalf of UEB, the Chair thanked Professor Roberts for his work and support during his tenure.
- .3 The Secretary confirmed that the meeting was quorate and there were no declarations of interest.

23.95 Minutes of 5 September and Action Log

- .1 The minutes of the meeting held on 5 September 2023 were confirmed as a true record.
- .2 The updated Action Log was NOTED. UEB considered overdue actions:
 - .1 Action 23.96.7 – it was AGREED that the CFO would seek an update on progress and the action should remain on the Action Log.
 - .2 Action 23.20.06 – it was NOTED that the action required a closure report following which it would be removed from the Action Log.
 - .3 Action 23.24.5 – it was AGREED that the action was no longer required and should be closed.
 - .4 Action 23.30.08 – it was REPORTED this action would be completed in the next few weeks.
 - .5 Action 23.54.12 – it was AGREED that the due date for sharing the engagement plan would be pushed back in line with the new go-live date.
 - .6 Action 23.63.8 – the DVC would seek an update on progress.
- .3 In connection with Action 23.71.5, it was REPORTED by the FPVC Arts that colleagues were keen to review their workloads with a view to identifying activities to cease or deprioritise. Guidance was sought from UEB on how to assess alignment of workload and whether reference should be to KPIs. UEB confirmed that reference should be to KPIs and their underlying strategic action plans.



Post meeting note: Action 23.63.8 was complete and should be removed from the Action Log.

23.96 Chair’s Business

- .1 The Vice-Chancellor had attended the Professional Services Awards the previous evening and reported the success of the event.
- .2 There was a detailed discussion on Research England’s consultation on the methodology for REF 2028. Research England had been unable to confirm how proposed elements of the Framework would be assessed. UEB expressed concern that too much focus on incentivising behaviours rather than research impact would result in the wrong balance for the Framework and risked it moving away from a measure of excellence.
- .3 The Vice-Chancellor continued to work with the Russell Group and Vice-Chancellors to navigate the challenges of the proposals.

	ACTION	OWNER	DUE
.4	To work within his wider network to understand the position of stakeholders.	PVC RKE	Ongoing
.5	To review the consultation and draft a University response	PVC RKE, Director of RKE Strategy	13 October

23.97 Fees, Pricing and Financial Awards - PGR Scholarships Update

- .1 UEB RECEIVED paper UEB/23/113 from the DVC and FPVC Science which provided an update on the progress of the PGR Scholarships Task and Finish Group and set out a number of recommendations.
- .2 UEB was reminded that it had considered the Undergraduate Fees, Pricing and Financial Awards paper at its last meeting. The work carried out by the PGR Scholarships Task and Finish Group was welcomed by UEB.
- .3 It was confirmed the proposal to ring fence a budget within each faculty for PGR financial awards was designed to protect investment in PGR students.
- .4 It was NOTED that the paper contained a recommendation that all scholarships should include fees and stipend. It was queried whether there was evidence to support the proposed recommendation. The FPVC Science confirmed that following workshops and discussion it was considered that the approach would be the best way to support students. It was confirmed that there was no quantitative data to support the recommendation.
- .5 UEB NOTED:
 - .1 An interim process for collecting key PGR data had been developed and would be piloted.
 - .2 The intention was to develop a business case for a PGR data capture system to improve return on investment information, and to make improvements to a website landing page. It was confirmed that there was no funding or time allocation in the Digital Futures Programme for the proposed activity. It was not clear whether any funding had been allocated in Research Strategic Delivery Plan.
 - .3 The planned business case would require approval and prioritisation through the normal processes.
 - .4 There was a view that a dedicated webpage for PGR students would raise the profile of the support available to PGR students.



- .6 UEB AGREED:
 - .1 To adopt a hybrid approach of central and local funding for financial awards which would include a single flexible ring-fenced budget to be administered centrally for the purposes set out in the paper, and a delegated ring-fenced budget for Faculty allocation. It was NOTED that further work would be required to determine the allocation and operation of the budgets.
 - .2 The standardisation of processes across Schools and Faculties for PGR students as set out in the paper.
- .7 UEB was not able to approve the recommendation that all scholarships were provided with a consumables budget via Faculties as it was NOTED that the work to understand the full cost implication of the recommendation had not been completed.

	ACTION	OWNER	DUE
.8	To confirm whether there was any funding in the Research Strategic Delivery Plan to progress the delivery of a PGR data capture system.	PVC RKE, FPVC Science	31 October
.9	To provide further progress update on the work of the group.	DVC, FPVC Science	Ongoing

23.98 Digital Core Update

- .1 UEB RECEIVED a paper (UEB/23/119) from the CFO supported by a presentation delivered by the Digital Core Project Director which provided a reminder of the scope of the project and the timelines as well as an overview of the lessons learned from institutions that had already implemented the system.
- .2 It was NOTED that the stakeholder engagement plan was in the final stages of development following the change in the go-live date. It would be finalised after the project’s training lead had assumed their post. UEB was keen to understand more details about the plan in due course.
- .3 Lessons learned from other institutions included:
 - .1 The importance of protecting the payroll and paying attention to all types of employee.
 - .2 Not adapting the system to meet every business process variation.
 - .3 The delivery of the system would not change the culture of the organisation.
 - .4 The importance of training users close to the go-live date and the correlation between help calls post go-live and those who had not completed training.
- .4 The complexity of the project was well understood and it was accepted that the support of UEB members would be vital as go live approached. In particular, support would be required to manage the inevitable discord that accompanied the go-live of all large-scale IT projects.
- .5 It was AGREED that:
 - .1 All UEB members would attend the system training and attend roadshows where possible.
 - .2 UEB should be approached to assist with the resolution of any significant challenges to the implementation of the project.
 - .3 The DVC would lead a piece of work to determine the approach for accommodating academic line management within the system.



	ACTION	OWNER	DUE
.6	To develop a training plan for UEB members	CFO, Project Director	30 November
.7	To determine the approach for accommodating academic line management within the Digital Core system.	DVC	15 December

23.99 Year End Financial Update

- .1 UEB RECEIVED a paper (UEB/23/116) from the CFO which provided a high-level review of the preliminary financial position for the 2022/23 financial year.
- .2 A small underlying surplus of £300k was indicated as forecasted. As expected, operational and strategic revenue underspends had occurred, however the tuition fee modelling and billing differential for 2022/23 was significantly higher than anticipated. Initial interrogation of position had taken place and further work would continue.
- .3 A significant statutory surplus would be indicated by the Financial Statements primarily due to changes in the valuations of deficit in the USS and CPAS pensions schemes and the revaluation of the University’s debt facility.
- .4 UEB NOTED the summary of the preliminary 2022/23 financial position.
- .5 UEB NOTED that whilst inflation had been absorbed, the small, forecasted surplus of £2.7m for 2023/24 would have an impact on the investment pipeline. UEB further NOTED there were already approximately £20m of adjustments to be made to account for under recruitment at undergraduate level and a higher than budgeted increase in utilities cost.
- .6 Increase in income generation would not be met by undergraduate tuition fees. It was expected that tuition fees would remain at their current level for the foreseeable future. In order to drive income, it would be necessary to meet international recruitment and research margin targets.
- .7 A session would be delivered at the next UEB Away Day to consider how to meet the short-term financial challenge for 2023/24 and to plan for the longer term. Longer term plans, which had received support from Finance Committee, were likely to include a combination of delivering an increase in commercial income, a campaign on financial management, detailed consideration of the cost versus impact of University activities and the development and implementation of a target operating model for the University.

23.100 Financial Benchmarking 2023

- .1 UEB RECEIVED and NOTED a paper (UEB/23/115) from the CFO which set out a summary of the HESA and Tribal financial benchmarking exercises. It was highlighted that the Tribal exercise included Professional Services data.
- .2 UEB NOTED the consistent messages that the two different benchmarking exercises had indicated which were summarised as:
 - 1. Surpluses were lower than the benchmark group.
 - 2. Expenditure was above the benchmark group.
 - 3. Nottingham had a more senior staffing structure.
 - 4. International recruitment remained lower than peers.
 - 5. Research income and cost recovery was below that of peers.
 - 6. Teaching contribution was good.



- .3 Further exploration was required of the benchmarked support costs for some Professional Services departments which were lower than other institutions.
- .4 The CFO REPORTED that there had been a detailed discussion at the last meeting of Finance Committee which considered the 2022/23 year end position and the financial challenges for 2023/24.

23.101 Roundtable

- .1 The Provost UNM confirmed that recruitment targets had been met. UNM had received a high level of international applications for undergraduate programmes.
- .2 The PVC GE reported that student mobility numbers had almost returned to 2018/19 pre-pandemic levels.
- .3 An overview of a successful British Council visit to China was provided by the DVC. A further note of details would be provided by circulation.
- .4 The Registrar NOTED the effort of staff across the University to ensure the success of the arrival and return period for students.
- .5 The work of the Free Speech Working Group continued. Guidance from the Office for Students was expected later in the year.

	ACTION	OWNER	DUE
.6	To circulate to UEB further details of the British Council visit to China.	DVC	31 October