



University Executive Board

Minutes of the meeting of 15 September 2020

Attending Professor Shearer West (Vice-Chancellor), Professor Andrew Long (DVC and Chair), Professor John Atherton (FPVC Medicine and Health Sciences), Professor Dame Jessica Corner (PVC RKE), Dr Paul Greatrix (Registrar), Professor Jeremy Gregory (FPVC Arts), David Hill (CDO), Jaspal Kaur (Director of Human Resources), Professor Graham Kendall (Provost UNM), Professor Sam Kingman (FPVC Engineering), Professor Todd Landman (FVPC Social Sciences), Professor Nick Miles (Provost UNNC), Professor Robert Mokaya (PVC GE), Margaret Monckton (CFO), Professor Kevin Shakesheff (FPVC Science), Professor Sarah Sharples (PVC EDI), Sarah Speight (PVC ESE)

Attending Rowena Hall (Secretary), Professor Chris Tuck, Dr Claire Gibson, Anne Partington, Head of Strategy Support for minute 20.105, Mike Early, Senior Risk Advisor for minute 105, Professor Peter Licence for minute 20.106, Andy Nolan Director of Development and Sustainability for minute 20.106, Jenny Vempati Director of Internal Audit for minute 20.108

20.101 Welcome, Declarations of Interest and Quoracy

- .1 The Chair welcomed Professor Chris Tuck, APVC for Research and Knowledge Exchange, Engineering, and Dr Claire Gibson, Head of the School of Psychology, to the meeting as observers.
- .2 The Secretary confirmed that the meeting was quorate.
- .3 The Chief Financial Officer and PVC EDI declared an interest in Item 8. There were no further declarations.

20.102 Minutes of the Meeting Held on 3 August 2020 and Action Tracker

- .1 The minutes of the meeting held on 3 August 2020 were AGREED as an accurate record and the Action Tracker was NOTED.

20.103 Chair's Business

- .1 The Vice-Chancellor had circulated an update to members before the meeting and requested Members to consider how they might maintain resilience and provide support to each other and across the University over the coming months.
- .2 A Member suggested that management and leadership should be UEB's main focus; defining clear expectations to support clarity of role for staff. There was a view that Senior Leaders' Forums had become more important than ever and it was AGREED that their increased frequency should remain over the coming months. There was scope provide different formats for the sessions.
- .3 It was NOTED that extensive and regular communications consisting of updates, guidance, and advice were being delivered across the University, but in some areas staff considered that they did not have sufficient information. In a number cases information was requested



that had already been communicated on more than one occasion. Further thought was required to understand whether the most effective tools were being used for communication and how staff might better engage with the communications. A suggestions was the introduction of a 'virtual common room'.

- .4 It was acknowledged that UEB would not be able and nor should it try to provide the solutions to all the issues and concerns that arose over the next few months. Consideration needed to be given to how UEB could support Senior Leaders to feel confident to manage arising situations. There was a suggestion that individual UEB members might join School and Department meetings as attendees rather than leading all engagement sessions.
- .5 The Registrar highlighted the trend for staff to be regularly working outside core hours. Whilst in some cases this had been necessary, it would be important to ensure that the practice did not become accepted and expected across the University. The ambition to achieve Teams Free Friday where possible needs to be reinforced. It was suggested that a small group might consider how to achieve a return to more normalised working hours.

	ACTION	OWNER	DUE
.6	To maintain the increased frequency of Senior leaders Forums.	Registrar	30 September
.7	To consult with Senior Leaders to understand the preferences for the format of sessions	Registrar	30 September
.8	To reconsider the approach for communications to understand if there are more effective means and how staff might better engage with communications.	VC, DVC, CFO, Registrar, Director of Communications and Advocacy	30 September
.9	To ensure UEB members had access to diary information on when other UEB members would be on campus	Registrar	30 September
.10	To consider further whether a small group should be established to consider how to support a return to more normalised working hours.	Vice-Chancellor to consider further	7 October

20.104 Supplementary Staff Communications

- .1 UEB RECEIVED and NOTED paper (UEB/20/118) presented by the Director of Human Resources.
- .2 The Director of Human Resources apprised UEB of developments in the local and national UCU position regarding return to campus and teaching. The supplementary guidance contained in the paper was prepared to provide clarification on concerns raised by the UCU and by staff during staff engagement sessions. The supplementary guidance had been shared with the UCU and the only point of contention remained one paragraph which referred to no member of teaching staff being compelled to return to campus based teaching if it posed demonstrable risk to the their physical or mental health. The main concern here from UCU remained the issue of the demonstrability of the risk.
- .3 The Director of HR reiterated the balance between operational requirements and staff and student wellbeing and confirmed that Head of Schools were engaged in conversations with individual staff members, where health, mental health and wellbeing concerns had been raised, to support and provide flexibility where possible. In some cases additional evidence had been requested in connection with the health concern, but not solely for evidential purposes but to ensure the school had the relevant information to be able to support the staff member as appropriate.
- .4 It was further confirmed that feedback was still awaited from two of the three Trade Unions on the proposed joint agreement relating to compulsory redundancies.



- .5 Subject to a minor amendment to the Testing and Tracing section and a final review by the Vice-Chancellor, UEB endorsed the Supplementary Guidance for communication to staff.
- .6 The Registrar confirmed that the outbreak response plan would be shared with UEB members.

	ACTION	OWNER	DUE
.7	To circulate the Outbreak Response Plan to UEB	Registrar	15 September

20.105 Risk

- .1 UEB RECEIVED and NOTED paper (UEB/20/112) presented by the Head of Strategy Support and the Senior Risk Advisor.
- .2 The Head of Strategy Support provided an overview of the discussion at Planning and Resources Committee which included ensuring that there remained a focus on non-COVID related risks, specifically health and safety and staff morale. The Committee was keen that the reputation risk was revisited to ensure it was correctly defined and set at the correct level. It had been suggested that student retention and student experience should be included as separate risks to the education risk. A peer review of risks conducted by risk owners had been agreed which should be completed by the end of the year.

20.106 Locking-in the Benefits of Lockdown: Environmental Sustainability during Recovery from COVID 19

- .1 UEB RECEIVED paper UEB/20/117 from the FPVC MHS and presented by Professor Pete Licence and the Director of Sustainability. UEB NOTED that the paper contained recommendations for approval and requested endorsement of further areas for development.
- .2 UEB NOTED that whilst there had been wide consultation across Faculties in connection with the development of the paper, consultation with Professional Services Departments had been limited.
- .3 The Registrar confirmed that a working group had been established to develop and recommend an approach to agile working. Any reference to agile working would need to indicate that any formal decisions would have to wait until the working group had concluded its activity.
- .4 The Provost of UNM NOTED that some of the recommendations would not fit with operations at UNM, therefore clarity was required to indicate the location to which the recommendation would apply.
- .5 UEB supported the direction of travel set out in paper and made the following comments:
 - .1 The proposals contained in the paper should work towards supporting departments to embed sustainability in their operational functions and seek to establish behavioural change rather than impose a set of rules.
 - .2 References to agile working should be revised or removed.
 - .3 A full equality impact assessment would be required.
 - .4 Further consultation would be required, particularly with professional services, before a policy could be adopted.
 - .5 The motivation for each of the recommendations should be clearly linked to sustainability ambitions and not appear to link to financial savings.



- .6 The paper should be resubmitted to UEB for further consideration following further work and consultation.

	ACTION	OWNER	DUE
.6	To further develop the paper in line with feedback received and resubmit to UEB for further consideration	FPVC MHS	December 2020

20.107 Nominated Member Appointment Process

- .1 UEB RECEIVED paper UEB/20/115 from the Vice-Chancellor presented by the Head of Governance.
- .2 UEB NOTED the proposal to further develop the initiative to appoint staff members from across the University as members of UEB sub-committees. The approach set out in the paper aimed to encourage increased diversity of applicants and appointments.
- .3 It was anticipated that the Senate Effectiveness Review would resume in the coming weeks. Whilst it was not proposed to open applications for the sub-committees of Senate at this stage, UEB was keen that the Senate Effectiveness Review considered the diversity of both Senate and its sub-committees.
- .4 UEB AGREED the proposal contained in the paper and recommended that recruitment questions were carefully designed to support the appointment of applicants who were most able to support the development and progress of the University.

20.108 Internal Audit Six Month Plan

- .1 UEB RECEIVED and NOTED paper UEB/20/116 from the Chief Financial Officer and presented by the Director of Internal Audit.
- .2 It was suggested that within the proposed academic line management audit, there should be an element that focused specifically on Heads of School.
- .3 It was NOTED that there had been a recent stock take of REF progress and the proposed audit should be mindful not to overlap with that.
- .3 The internal audit six month plan was AGREED subject to the inclusion of an audit to review the operational impact of the COVID-related budget adjustment.

20.109 Roundtable

It was reported that:

- .1 Council had undertaken a mini effectiveness review resulting in 37 recommendations which had all been approved by Council.
- .2 There were 52 overdue internal audit actions. This would be reported to Audit and Risk Committee later in the week. UEB members were asked to focus on closure of the actions. In particular there were 11 that should have been cleared. If actions were not cleared, the action owner would be required to attend Audit and Risk Committee to explore the reasons for the delay.
- .3 There had been a lot of work ongoing in connection with students who were due to travel overseas as part of their programme from September/October 2020. The Minister of State for



Universities had endorsed the Foreign and Commonwealth Office advice and confirmed that whether the travel was essential was a decision for universities themselves. There was also work ongoing to clarify the University's position of students participating in placements from September/October 2020.

- .4 The IS team were focused on building solutions for the start of session including a building occupancy monitoring and alert system. Significant support was also being provided to the enhanced testing scheme. There had been a number of gateway review meetings to ensure that there was tech readiness for the start of session in areas such as timetabling and teaching.
- .5 The FPVC Science had chaired a city wide meeting related to the Black Lives Matter campaign. There was a significant strength of feeling from attendees at the meeting. The FPVC Science was keen to work with the PVC EDI and People to understand how the University could demonstrate a long term commitment to helping bring about change in this area. UEB members' support of events during Black History month was welcomed.
- .6 There had been an increase in the number of staff reporting COVID-19 symptoms to the staff helpline. Many of the reports appeared to be of symptoms related to seasonal illness, but work was underway to understand the viability for providing flu vaccinations to staff.
- .7 The Global Engagement newsletter would be relaunched later in the day.
- .8 The new library at UNNC would due to open imminently.
- .9 The campus at UNM was COVID-19 secure and ready to open.
- .10 There would not be an in-person graduation event in the UK in December
- .11 An area at KMC had been converted into a professional services hub for those staff who had needed to return to work and were in need of appropriate working space.