

Minutes

Subject	UCP Board Meeting
Date	Friday 16 th June 2017
Time	10am-12pm
Location	UCP Boardroom telephone conference to Chelmsford
Attendees	Mr Paul Bogle (joint chair), Mr Terry Jones (joint chair), Prof Lesley Dobree, Mr Peter Walker, Mr Paul T Cox, Mr J Larner, Ms E Nixon (minutes)
Apologies	Ms E Knight

No.	Item	Action
1.	<p>Apologies</p> <p>Apologies received from LK.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Declarations of interest <p>No new declarations of interest were reported.</p>	
2.	<p>Appointment of new chair</p> <p>A new chair has yet to be appointed to replace Allan Arnott; the Board felt that an internal chair would be more appropriate going forward. TJ had spoken with the ARU VC who felt that the current governance process through the Joint Venture Company (JVCo) could be replaced by a simpler form of agreement that may lead to the dissolution of the JVCo if both parties were in favour. The Board agreed to wait until that debate played out and that this meeting should be jointly chaired until there is further clarity.</p>	
3.	<p>Minutes of the last meeting 8th March 2017</p> <p>Minutes were agreed as accurate.</p>	
4.	<p>Matters arising</p> <p><u>BA/BSc Digital Communications and Marketing degree</u></p> <p>UCP are awaiting a response from ARU about validation for this degree. LD noted that further discussion is required as there have been some difficult issues to navigate eg competition with other ARU provision. LD will raise again but is not optimistic of a positive outcome. The Academic and Operating Agreement does allow for PRC to seek an alternative HEI partner in these circumstances but was strongly disposed not to do so because of the importance of the relationship and the additional complexity that would introduce. UCP currently offers 23 courses, a figure that must grow if the</p>	LD

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progress towards an independent university was to succeed. It was recognised that there would always be a structural tension for ARU between decisions that make good business sense for its future and the need to support the partnership. It was suggested that is now not likely that this degree will be ready for September 2017. TJ requested that ARU do their best to make a clear and timely decision so that UCP could consider the impact. LD agreed to discuss the issues with colleagues at ARU.

5. Academic Director's Report

JL presented and outlined the report providing performance against the key performance indicators in line with the 2014-18 HE Strategy along with curriculum developments and progress and update on student experience and enhancement.

KPI 1

- 153 firm acceptances.
- 11 from intermission.
- 11 part time.
- 32 insurance.
- 32 pending UCAS decision.
- Target of 250 new starts with a year end for 220 which is due to student retention.
- Reviewing ways at improving conversion at clearing are being developed.
- Aim to start the BA/BSc Digital Communications & Marketing degree in January.
- The two new engineering pathways will help improve numbers.
- Retention from level 4 to level 5 is being monitored and working with course leaders to improve this.
- 92% retention year 1 performance; the expectation is to be above 90%.
- The addition of unconditional offers by other universities does pose some further risks. Other factors to consider and entry grades and continuation but there is no data to support a direct correlation.

KPI 2

The HE internal process review is now complete with 98% graded good or better. The mean MES for UCP is 8.0 which is an increase on this time last year (7.9). Any less than 7.9 will be reviewed; 7.9 is best practice.

The NSS results will be known on 28th July.

The HE Conference being held on 5th July will help address some of the issues found in the MES. The schedule was presented. It was noted that many PRC teachers attend the Teaching and Learning conference at ARU.

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KPI 3

Employability and volunteer days were delivered in semester 2. UCP continues to liaise with small and large employers.

KPI 4

The decision following the QAA Review has been appealed and looking at the simplest resolute way to address the committee structure. It was reported that there have been a review of the terms of reference for the HE Board and how it reports to the PRC Corporation Board of Governors. HE is currently reported to the Curriculum & Quality Committee and is then referred up to Board level which is deemed a practical model. If the appeal is not successful a plan is in place to meet the needs of the review. The expected date of confirmation is early July. In the future the Joint Venture arrangements and where it sits will need to be clarified.

There is an ARU Institutional Review Academic Agreement which needs to be drawn up between ARU and UCP; however there is an overarching agreement which supersedes anything that is already in place; therefore nothing additional has to happen.

Retention is monitored and an action plan in place for courses losing numbers.

KPI 5

Awaiting outcome of phase 2 funding of £6.5m. The combined authority board sits on the 28th June; all indications show this will be approved.

Employer and community engagement has a target of 22 events for 2016/17 to ensure students are employable at the end of their degree. Archaeology students are working with the Must Farm Boats development.

KPI 6

JL provided an overview of a number of research activities being undertaken with the British Conference of Undergraduate Research; RAISE conference 2017 and engaging mature students with a vertical mentoring scheme.

The introduction of a Research and Scholarship Policy is being developed.

KPI 7

Validations are due for BSc Electronic & Electrical Engineering and BSc in Mechanical Engineering and the BA/BSc Digital Communications & Marketing as noted earlier in the minutes. The design of a new website is being used as an engagement tool for employers and community groups along with developing a system for sharing graduate recruitment and internship opportunities through this.

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6. **QRV Update and Action Plan**

The draft action plan was presented and outlined. The plan is to address the recommendations following the review especially around the pre-contractual information and Terms and Conditions to meet CMA Guidelines. Where the action plan addressed the governance issue, it was agreed that no firm decisions could be made before the QAA appeal had been determined (mid-July). However, in anticipation of the appeal being rejected, TJ had cleared the principle of the UCP HE Academic Board reporting directly to the PRC Board with his Board Chair and the Chair of the Curriculum and Quality Committee in advance so the change could be implemented if necessary.

The Board discussed if wider student representation is required at a higher level for example at key committees and at governance level; to comply with the higher education code of governance. Some of the CMA guidance is new with consumer protection legislation in place which is rigorously enforced. This was discussed and noted as a topical area for the sector.

It was clarified that ARU deal with all academic appeals and academic complaints; and there is a need for the current hand book to provide clear guidance around these areas.

Training for the new officer role has seen an extremely positive response; the training will provide comprehensive guidance on supporting students with complaints and appeals.

The report remains confidential until an outcome has been received. The HE Board have been informed of the findings; these could also impact the TDAP application. All partners will be kept in the loop to agree the action plan by liaising with PB.

All (lead
JL)

7. **Review of the JV Agreement**

Over time UCP needed to move to a validation agreement with ARU and this would be supported by a simplification of the current governance process. Both parties want to achieve the same outcome but the wording of the new agreement would be critical. The transfer of the building to PRC would need to be addressed and within the existing framework there is guidance on how that could be achieved. It was proposed that the building will continue to be used to deliver degrees and that would be the critical requirement for HEFCE agreement. A joint team to progress this work is the way forward and there would be a need for legal advice although this could be the same for both parties. Validation agreements have already been drawn up for other circumstances and other areas will be standard.

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8. **TDAP Update**

DC was not present at the meeting therefore JL presented the detailed two page report briefly because many of the issues had already been discussed. The report addressed:

- Governance and Oversight (on hold prior to QAA appeal outcome)
- Financial Planning and Resource Allocation – the need for a post-TDAP Plan and the implications of managing the Phase 2 funding of £6.52 million from the Combined Authority after 28 June
- Greater Independence in the Development of the Curriculum

The Board noted the report but decided that the three recommendations would not be implemented without further work to develop the detail.

9. **Budget and Financial Reports**

The budget for 2017-18 has been prepared on a target overall student number of 535 FTEs. The represents an overall decrease of 59 FTEs HEFCE countable students from last year of which 34.5 FTEs are year two students and 39.5 continuing students offset by an increase of 15 year one students. A reforecast budget will be adjusted with a new target student numbers; reduce the contingency for withdrawals and setting a more realistic target of student numbers will reduce withdrawals. There are few changes in expenditure with aim of a break even position.

The Accounts on page 46 of the report were noted; staffing costs are charged through a shared services agreement and there are no plans to change staffing arrangements.

The Board were asked to approve the budget; the budget was approved and the financial forecast was noted.

It was noted that the TDAP progress report makes reference to a financial plan and resource allocation; when time is right further talks will involve Mike Frost. Figures will be superseded if the company is dissolved; this would become an agreement between UCP and ARU.

10. **Risk Register**

It was noted that the University's risk reporting template has been updated adding in a section to document methods of assurance alongside early warning indicators and removing a section of additional mitigating actions which was considered unnecessary. A timely review is required to carry out some health analysis and add dissolving the Joint Venture to the register (TJ noted wording for the risk and will email PB). It was suggested to add ways to demonstrate methods of insurance around early warning indicators. Transitional changes will be added to the list of risks. It was noted that the governance structure

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isn't fit for purpose and failed to meet the requirements of CMA and HEFCE. Actions will include what is currently taking place to meet these requirements.

Risk 3 – the NSS is now lower on the radar.

Risk 5 - amend wording from QAA to QA Consultant. It was suggested to adjust to 4/4 – 21.

Risk 6 - Retention is improving and heading in the right direction. It was suggested that the scoring be adjusted; however it was agreed to wait until the new academic year.

11. **Date of next meeting**

Monday 30th October. In the meantime work will proceed with regards to the new framework with a view to meet in 6 weeks time to discuss.

12. **AOB**

LD noted that this will be her last meeting; and thanked all for their support and wished everyone good luck in what is trying to be achieved. TJ expressed his appreciation and thanks for LD's work to establish and further UCP. He noted that he'd only disagreed with LD once and had subsequently been proved comprehensively wrong to do so! She would be sorely missed.