

08 December 2022

Board of Trustees, Minutes of Meeting (Non-Confidential)

Present:	Laura Tamara Paidra Mash John Dix Fiona McFeeley Tania Struetzel Tabitha Ajao Ryan Murphy	Incoming Co President External Trustee External Trustee External Trustee External Trustee Student Trustee Vice President
In attendance:	Amy McLaughlan Mark McCormack	Head of Membership Services & Engagement (minute taker) CEO
Apologies:	Suman Naz Dan Login Quadri Yusuf Beverley Hoare	Student Trustee External Trustee Co-President University Trustee
Date:	08 December 2022 5.30pm to 7.30pm	
Location:	Zoom call	

1: Welcome, Introductions and Apologies

The Chair welcomed everybody and advised that apologies had been received from Quadri Yusuf and Beverley Hoare.

Item 2: Board Administration (Minutes, Conflicts, Matters Arising)

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 10th October 2022 were **agreed**.

A standing conflict of interest was noted by the CEO in relation to CEO Performance Review and employees present (Exec and SLT) in relation to HR matters.

Matters Arising: both matters complete.

- Add 'recruitment of staff' to risk register and move to high risk. *Complete*.

Item 3: Governance matters

MM revisited topic of memorandum and articles review: requires review under Education Act '94 Code of Practice (University review of articles) and governance instrument (Trustee review) every 5 years. Not mandatory, but an opportunity; albeit no concerns within institution have been raised. MM will raise with UoB Registrar. MM invited feedback on any changes trustees felt necessary.

Acknowledged appetite to review Union Parliament provisions as this is thought not to have evolved well to changing student behaviours and expectations. Discussions expected in Semester 2 with Exec Team regards to any future changes to elections or roles. Including reviewing NUS Anti-Semitism report outcome.

Item 4: CEO Report

Take paper as read. MM highlighted work on cost of living; efforts to improve staffing capacity that had seen new appointments made with 4 new appointments expected by January and all long-term absentees having returned; and a successful term of inductions extending from the strategic plan. Sickness absence had been challenging during the term.

Re recruitment, trustees heard how the recent recruitment campaigns had invited encouraging levels of diversity among applicants.

MM updated trustees on the University's regulatory and economic landscape, referencing inspection by the Office for Students (OfS) and a recently introduced era of new regulation, which brought new demands and challenges for the University. MM raised the prospect of the University withdrawing from its relationship with London School of Commerce (LSC) in the future; AMC was exploring the existing Student Protection Plan and any projected student support that could be needed.

A viable plan that demonstrated good governance and risk management would be beneficial to the trustees as a starting point to mitigating the consequences of any risk.

Item 5: Strategic plan performance review

MM introduced. Discussed challenges thus far in meeting target for course representatives; MM provided context on the SU's activity toward the target thus far. New software being bought in next term which will help track email correspondence with lecturers to help the SU pinpoint action areas. Staff engagement was raised as an issue in one faculty, which coincided with the most challenging of faculty results.

MM provided context to the paperwork and performance against Lead Measures:

- improvement on campus engagement on the previous year;
- variance on budget is going as expected - campuses feel busy but students not spending what they used to;
- not getting great participants at events;
- engagement in welfare services is positive and high levels of students asking for representation on concerns;
- comms engagement is positive in some areas and not others, consistent with the previous year, though the team will have more capacity to explore channel performance as we progress through the next calendar year; and,
- students are coming back to societies, which is encouraging, albeit incomparable with pre-pandemic participation.

Item 6: Risk Register

MM noted that staff capacity shortage had been added following discussion at last meeting. Whilst recruitment had been encouraging, this was to be retained until at least March as the SU welcomed new inductees as well as approached phase two of the strategic review. MM thanked Exec for their patience with team vacancies.

Trustees discussed and/or noted the following during their discussion of the register:

- Campus closures and course closures to be added to the risk register and placed high up as top-most risk until further clarity on the LSC withdrawal was known.
- Regulatory requirements – TEF is on there, but not B3 or new APP, or Freedom of Speech? Some regulatory or benchmarking areas related to risks already identified on

the register, whereas B3 was a specified regulatory requirement with more significant institutional consequences; agreed to remove TEF risk and replace with B3.

- Agreed to move low risk item 3, “Ineffective Sabbatical officers; Sabbatical officers do not carry out their duties effectively, and attendance is poor” to moderate risk to promote ongoing dialogue on team support and effectiveness.

Item 7: Block Grant

MM updated on progress developing the block grant submission for mid-2023:

- The University was prepared to receive a request to uplift the recurrent grant to the students’ union in 2023 on the basis that the SU could improve on its NSS score. It is unknown whether this would change as a result of partnership developments.
- A Benchmarking Exercise was initiated in the summer in preparation for funding plans for late Spring 2023. The exercise was suspended during Semester 1 midway through (intentionally) and will be taken up again early 2023.

Item 8: Affiliation NUS

Take paper as read.

MM introduced: item comes to board every time as governance oversight; board have previously asked the extent to which students are told what NUS is doing for them and improvements have been made on this.

Trustees discussed recent travails of NUS re anti-semitism and disengagement of Government. Brighton Uni are one of many SU’s holding or who have held disaffiliation referendum; Herts SU board want to leave NUS, as do more SU trustee boards, but extent to which this is then followed-through with membership disaffiliation is limited.

Student/Exec Trustees highlighted an absence of awareness of NUS’ recent issues among the student community at Beds, and hence there is no visible appetite for change either way. Trustees noted that they have a responsibility to the membership to promote discussion on their behalf, but this must be balanced against the genuine interests of our students and focussing on the concerns that matter to them.

Exec and SLT had talked about the issue but not asked students, however students had been informed. No one has got in touch with questions. Investigation was done for antisemitism and will be announced early 2023; although no policy on it ourselves, conversation would continue. Current views were that students’ cost of living concerns were paramount. Exec felt that many students may not understand the affiliation arrangement or its benefits/purposes. Students don’t seem to have a problem with having an affiliation with NUS when they are aware.

Trustees agreed that questions of affiliation with NUS should come from the members themselves; the trustees may need to trigger a decision on students’ behalf if appetite was gauged from students, but in the absence of that appetite the trustees should not push an issue not visibly ‘felt’ by our students.

Item 9: Executive Team overview and annual plans

Ryan – Continuing work on PAT for the New Year. Have also taken up project on campus visits which I’m passing onto the university some things that have had no action but given what’s been discussed today I’ll be able to pick up in the New Year. Additionally with the cost of living all of the Exec team made visits to events and the ‘cook off’ everyone enjoyed. Tabitha and Ryan also collected feedback from sport committee members on events in the uni, feedback was well

received. Had our disability forum, feedback was: very hard for students to get their needs met and when they were put in place lecturers sometimes ignored them.

Tabitha – thanked the team for their support. Been working mainly on mental health and how students can be more aware of their and others' mental health, students are aware how much help there is on mental health so aren't getting what they need as a result, making students aware and promoting this is what I'm working on. Would like to do a page on the SU site, just information on help they can access such as 'Mind' cafes. Want to make mental health training mandatory as lecturers are not helping students in the way they should.

Laura - really happy with Ryan and Tabitha's attitude and the way they've 'mucked in' with great ideas. The 'Food Pantry' has worked well. Want to continue pushing for students and that we're here for them.

Item 10: HR Report / CEO Performance Review

Minutes provided for info.

Not had a line management review since the appraisal - will defer on this item.

Key priorities for the year are around strategic review and staffing issues, a process is under way to solve one of the key problems of recruitment at the SU, next problem is about funding- both been spoken about today. Looking forward to Spring to see where we are with both.

Item 11: Finance Report/ Finance Subcommittee & Management account

Minutes provided for info.

MM in Ann's absence - forecast for the year is to still run to budget; we've been running vacancies that have counteracted by additional capacity support, also have maternity leave within the budget. Talking to auditors about fund allocation from last year, will be bought up at the next Finance committee.

Item 12: Impact report 21/22

Hasn't been circulated as isn't ready yet, due for completion next week. First draft from designers was shown. This is an FYI item.

Item 13: AOB

Trustees noted that, during the Board Away day, board meetings were set to change. There was hope for introduction of a 'topic in focus' from the strategic plan. Today's meeting was a lot of updates rather than discussion. MM apologised that the changes had not yet been implemented but assured the Board that changes were imminent, but MM had sought to implement these from Semester 2 onwards.