

Paper Title:	Minutes to Board of Trustees Meeting, 30th March 2021
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Date:	30 March 2021

Topic and Purpose of the paper in brief:	Record of meeting of Board of Trustees.
Key Points from the Paper (5 maximum):	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Trustees approved Accounts Y/E July 2020 2. Trustees agreed the new Memplus digital platform 3. Trustees agreed next year Officers should be held more accountable to student body.
List data or information sources:	Board paperwork
Please tick box if this paper refers to any one of the following:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> A standing agenda item (or periodic planned item) <input type="checkbox"/> The Strategic Plan or Strategic Action Plan <input type="checkbox"/> An emerging priority or issue
<p>To what extent could the outcome of this paper affect the inclusiveness of the SU and the accessibility of the SU in respect to promoting equality, diversity and mitigating barriers to equitable engagement with the students' union?</p> <p>Board is the strategic, governing body of the SU from a legal and administrative perspective and therefore business directly relates to the SU's strategies to promote equality and diversity and provide an accessible, inclusive membership organisation.</p>	
Is this paper:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> For decision or approval <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> For information and acknowledgement

CONFIDENTIAL

30 March 2021 Board of Trustees **Minutes of Meeting**

Present:	Michael Alawaye Joshua Chukwu Tania Struetzel Tim Stone Mary Holyoak	President (Chair) VP Union Development External Trustee External Trustee Student Trustee
Attending:	Mark McCormack Ann Binks (minute taker) Amy McLaughlan Lisa Roerig	CEO Head of Finance and Resources Head of Membership Services & Engagement Head of Marketing, Communications & Business Development
Apologies:	Daniel Login Robert Benson Hafijur Shuvo Alessandro Manea	External Trustee Student Trustee VP Equality VP Education
Date	30 th March 2021 5.30pm to -8.15 pm	
Location	Zoom(virtual)	

1. Welcome, Introductions and Apologies

Dan Login, Robert Benson ,Hafijur Shuvo and Alexandra Manea have sent apologies. It was noted the Board were still quorate even though a number of trustees were absent.

2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 15 December 2020 were agreed.

3. Conflicts of interest

Mark McCormack advised of the ongoing conflict of interest surrounding the CEO line management and a conflict of interest for Executive Trustees regarding the item on Executive Officer Censure.

4. Matters Arising/Outstanding Actions

Action	By Whom
More information to be added to the Beds SU website so that students can have a greater understanding of why Beds SU is affiliated to NUS. <i>There is some text on the Beds SU website and a lot of work has been done around comms promoting NUS delegates.</i>	LR
A report to be circulated to the Board on the issue of the VAT Catering Income concessionary exemption to allow the Board to have more information before they decide whether to contribute funds of £5k. <i>This has been circulated to the Finance committee.</i>	AB
Head of membership Services to decide whether voting option C or D should be taken forward. <i>This has been done and the option used during the recent elections.</i>	AM
CEO Objectives to be circulated to the Board for their comments. <i>The objectives had been circulated and were also included in the Board paperwork</i>	MM
Contact Drupal Patel via email and post to advise that if he does not respond by the 31 st January his Board membership will be revoked. <i>Drupal Patel had been emailed and a letter posted to him. No response had been received so their trustee membership has now been revoked.</i>	MM

5. Governance Matters

Debra Hinds has resigned from the University and therefore they are no longer eligible to be Beds SU university appointed trustee. Plans are afoot to recruit a new University trustee. The CEO will liaise with Tania Struetzel on this matter as a list of possible candidates has been drawn up quite recently. If any other Board members are aware of any suitable candidates, please advise the CEO.

The Board discussed the prevalence of a University-appointed trustee in students' unions and the perceived value or conflict in the role. Trustees acknowledged that the Union relies on the University for an incredibly large amount of funding; building soft power inside the University is a good idea; and it is also common practice in the Charity sector for large donors to have strong engagement or presence on boards. The recruitment of Deborah Hinds had involved the University Governors and they had commended the thoroughness of the SU's approach in selection.

Dhrupal Patel had been removed from the Board as of 01 February 2021 and was no longer a trustee or a Director.

Beds SU are currently advertising for two new External Trustee positions with a deadline for applications as the 16 April.

The CEO advised that recruiting student trustees had extended into the new academic year, shortening period of office and risking vacancy. The student trustee Mary Holyoak is graduating this summer. **ACTION** student trustee recruitment is to be open next term.

Mary Holyoak advised that they had 'stumbled' across the opportunity to become a student trustees and wondered if there was a more effective way to get the information out as Students might think they would be unable able accommodate the position alongside a full-time placement but it does not take up as much time as one might imagine. **ACTION** Mary Holyoak to assist the Head of Communications to do a video to promote the opportunity to become a Student trustee.

6. Executive team update

A paper had been supplied. The Trustees were invited to scrutinise, comment or query the work of the Executive Team. The reporting format had been revised to present officer work collectively under four categories of:

- Careers & Employability
- Student Support
- Academic Success
- SU engagement

The papers were taken as read and the Executive officers were given the opportunity to expand on any items they wished to.

The President advised that a lot of students had applied for the hardship fund and that the Executive officers were pushing for a mitigation plan for students. The No disadvantage policy has been maintained this year, almost, in the guise of a 'safety net'.

The VP for Union Development is continuing with collaboration working with faculties regarding curriculum lead societies.

The Board asked if it was an aim to have societies right across all areas of the curriculum and were advised that this was the case. Students are very enthusiastic for this but need assistance in achieving it.

The President advised that the University were going to withhold the new grading scheme for the coming year as basing a grade on one academic year is not fair in the current climate.

The Board advised that the current way the Executive Officers were presenting their updates make it very difficult to see the progress and impact they have made. The Executive officer might want to consider a reporting template that will work for both Union parliament and the Board.

7. HR Report

The Board received a paper with notes of the CEO line-management meeting and CEO Objectives. The line management meeting had centred around the CEO's Objectives, reviewing them against Board feedback from December and emerging information. Despite questions over the success measures arising from the challenges of the pandemic upon the organisation, the CEO appeared to be making good progress so far against the objectives.

Trustees were invited to comment and scrutinise. The External Trustees were also asked to consider Line Management arrangements for the CEO following Tim Stone's departure in June 2021.

8. Finance Report

a) Finance sub-committee minutes

Minutes for the recent Finance Committee meeting of 08 February were presented. The Board were advised that these minutes were also being presented as draft minutes as the next Finance committee meeting was not until after The Board meeting. The key points were:

- A positive variance against budget was reported. FinCom were advised of SLT-approved budgetary virements.
- A New Enquiry workshop, requiring resource, was introduced and explained.
- The reserve policy was amended to reflect four months operating costs.
- The annual Audit will be reviewed at a separate meeting on 17 March.
- Finance committee agreed that the Executive pay should be increased to £20k per year for the 2021/22.

b) Management accounts and report

The Board received a set of Management Accounts with forecast year-end figures as at 21 March 2021. The forecasted deficit at the end of the financial year was reported as (£26.5K) against a budgeted deficit of (£33.2k).

The Board advised that they did not have any questions about the Finance papers.

9. CEO Report

The CEO had prepared a report for The Board

Things to feel good about

UoB is to introduce a safety net to help protect students' grades after an intervention from the Officers. 75% of Course Reps are filled or explained. Student Voice Forums took place 140 students and 77 staff attended the 15 forums. Project Reach Out has begun, which sees students telephoned by SU Student Staff. Over 700 students have been telephoned so far.

Things to think about

In the SU Advice Service year to date enquiries are up 29% on the previous year (increase of 62% since 2018-19), and cases to-date have fallen on last year, by 5%. The staffing level in Advice remains in flux with the SU investing in the service by bringing in additional staffing resource to ensure smooth operations during periods of absence.

Scrutiny via the Union Parliament meeting has been limited, with quorum not met; albeit some policies have been taken to the meeting. The Exec wrote to the University to demand parity in treatment of students in university endorsed accommodation UoB responded: they sympathise with student concerns; continue to seek solutions; but have disregarded any notion of contributing. The Exec wrote to the VC to demand action on racial injustice at UoB; but they are yet to respond.

Report on delegated actions

The audited accounts are complete and ready for sign-off by the Trustees; The Students Elections are underway, turnout has already exceeded last year (14% as at 23 March), Applications have closed for the new Member Relations Coordinator position, which will administer the new, centralised enquiries services.

Update on key meetings and relationships

Regular meetings between CEO and senior figures continue, as well as attendance across senior forums. VC's Covid Management Group has emerged as a key influencing space. An additional Easter staff/officer conference is planned to begin discussion with the staff team on returning to campuses, with wellbeing facilitators/speakers booked. The annual staff survey has closed, results to be presented to HR Sub-Committee in May. The Staff Forum has ceased a new 'Monthly Gathering' event to share management information, allow feedback with the CEO and review policies has been implemented

The CEO report was taken as read and asked if they had any questions. The CEO advised that Advice was again included under the questionable area. There was currently disruption to ordinary capacity in Advice; this was incurring further cost. The Trustees queried quality maintenance in this time and were assured that this was not at issue.

Trustees queried how the phone bank was proceeding. Mary Holyoak advised that she had been contacted a few weeks ago and had had a nice long chat. The call had been very helpful and made them feel valued and appreciated as student. The Trustees asked if it is purposed that the project would be extended and were advised that it depended on the impact that it had on the NSS results and Beds SU survey. The trustee felt that it should not just be about the NSS score but how the problems that students are experiencing are fed back to the University; generally feelings of its value were positive and continuing it was a serious contention for future years, even when back on campus.

The trustees noted that Union Parliament has not been quorate and wanted to know what was being put in place to try and prevent this happening next year. They were advised that overall Union Parliament had been positive this year but that a review was being undertaken

in April/May. We are looking at various options, but we might have to accept that Beds SU Union parliament might not be in the 'traditional' format. The objective is to make it relevant for students.

a) Strategic progress and report on organisational plans

b) Union KPIs report

– Items 10 a) and b) taken together.

A CEO Summary Report was received. A KPI report was also presented.

c) Update on Student Voice developments, 20-21

Objective 1 in the SU Plan 20-21 is to take a *Whole Union Approach to Student Voice*, which followed concern at multiple levels about the efficacy of the course representative system. Changes to the system for student academic representation were introduced in September 2020, led by a new partnership approach between Beds SU and Student Experience.

A paper provided update on the progress of improvements; it reported positive change in course rep numbers and student participation in Student Voice.

The CEO advised that it will be interesting to see NSS score this year as we have had students queuing up to be involved in the Student Voice forums. It is good to hear UOB talking about student voice in an invested manner. Head of Membership advised that they are proud of the number of students that Beds SU have worked with this year. The speed at which we managed to get an online presence has set us up well. Most students are course focused so if we want a good relationship with them will need to go through their courses and hopefully now, we will now be far more readily welcomed into classrooms.

The student trustee advised that they thought that students need Beds SU more than ever. During their first year they had never even spoken to their course rep. It is a negative thing that students need their course reps so much, but it does raise the profile of the Union.

The trustees queried what was coming through student voice platform at UOB and how the small drop in the diversity of the Academics reps was going to be addressed. Staff responded; the diversity of reps was a known issue, but unexplored and the SU was only beginning to gain traction in raising awareness and support. It was felt this issue could only be resolved through acknowledgement and partnership with academic staff, and so SU intervention related to wider efforts to develop student voice in coming years, as indicated in the paperwork.

The Union is now receiving more support from the University with the Academic Rep system and Academics do appear to consider that the Union is more competent now so should prefer us to start recruiting early for Academic Reps. Hopefully the incoming Executive will help the Union to address the diversity issue.

Head of Membership advise that the success of the platform will be measured differently by the Union and UoB. The Uob would measure success in a student getting a response within

72 hours whereby the Union would judge success if the student gets a useful response within 72 hours, now the Union has 'eyes' on the platform we can judge if the system is helping students and more stats will be available.

d) Risk Register

Trustees reviewed the risk register.

Risk relating to member engagement had been lowered to Major/possible due to extensive work on Student Voice as had those relating to provision of Academic Reps.

Heightened risk to poorer NSS performance was acknowledged due to student experiences in the pandemic, despite the positive changes seen effected. Risk associated with Study Hubs not being correctly represented had also increased.

The trustees queried if the risks relating to COVID could be downgraded but were advised that it would be more appropriate if this was reviewed in June. Although there is a breeze of optimism at the UoB the Students' Union block grant won't be approved until June.

e) Year-end Accounts, for approval

The Audited Year-End accounts for July 2020 were presented to the Trustees for approval at the March Board meeting following review by Finance Committee earlier in March. Trustees received a briefing note/analysis.

The Board **Approved** Beds SU final accounts for Year ending July 2021.

f) 2021 Student Elections

A verbal update on the elections was given by the CEO.

The Beds SU Student Elections had closed the week prior to Board. Thirty-three students had put themselves forward and campaigned to be elected for one of four new Executive Officer positions or Delegates to the National Union of Students.

To be inclusive of our diverse student body and the different circumstances in which they engage in their student experience at UoB, Beds SU had elongated the nominations and voting period and redesigned the voting system, which sought to level-up the influence of our harder-to-reach campuses. The SU announced a record turnout of 2,647 voters, which represented 16% of the student body (up 4% on 2020). There was a considerable boost in turnout beyond Luton, whilst retaining the Luton vote levels, narrowing the gaps between the proportion of voters at each campus.

The CEO advised that the elections had gone extremely well and that we could reflect on job well done and a big thank you goes out to students and candidates for engaging. The new

voting system had worked: it was not to prevent any candidate winning but ensure, in order to win, candidates needed to engage with other campuses which enhances the democratic process. The newly elected Officers had met with SLT yesterday and they were a very a diverse team with all different student journeys; one of the candidate's elected was from London Bridge. A full breakdown of the election statistics will be available at the June Board meeting for analysis.

The trustees thanked everybody for all the hard work that they had done to ensure that the elections were successful.

10. Additional Business

a) Censure of Executive Officers

A paper to trustees introduced the topic: Changes to the Bylaws (October 2019) introduced automatic censure for Executive Officers who fail to engage with accountability mechanisms. Bylaws had not been applied to in 20-21 despite automatic censure being applicable; staff suggested the censure policy be better embedded and support reviewed.

The trustees were invited to discuss.

Head of membership advised that the current byelaws automatically allowed censure of officers around attendance. They haven't been applied this year as it had been a tough year for everybody but moving forward, we may need to apply census to officers who do not comply. The trustees' opinion on this matter was being sort.

The opinions of the Executive officers present were sought. They felt that applying censure could be a step forward to ensure deadlines were met and might act as a motivation however it is possible that this might have a negative impact on the executive mental health. The President advised that often they could not divulge what they were working on due to confidentiality issues as the information was not yet in the public domain and felt monthly reporting was too frequently.

The trustees advised that maybe the officers reports should be streamlined, and the support provide to the officers should reflect on their needs. If Officers are not currently attending Union Parliament or submitting reports perhaps the process needs to be reviewed to one that will work.

The trustees **agreed** that the Executives paperwork should be overhauled to make it easier to read and more relevant to what the officers are trying to achieve.

The trustees queried how the censure of Officers interacts with Beds SU staff HR disciplinary policies. They were advised that aim of this is to be supportive rather than part of competency/disciplinary system. However, a competency issue with an Officer would be dealt with by a vote of no confidence from the student body rather than as a HR issue.

The trustees queried if censure action was taken if it would be reported to the trustees as it's pointless if the student body were unaware of a system put in place to help with accountability towards the students. They were advised that this would happen automatically if enough censures applied to an Officer, they would automatically put in a vote of no confidence, but this can be overturned by the board, so it is a very soft process. It is in place as a body of accountability to the student population. The staff do provide the Officers with a lot of support but it hasn't really worked very well this year, so a review of the support available will be carried out. Currently student accountability methods are not strong enough, as this conversation at the board shows.

The trustees **agreed** the measures as accountability is very important but recognise that this year had been exceptional and feel that it be appropriate to bring in the measures next year.

Action However censure is a very old-fashioned expression and needs to be replaced but an accountability mechanism is required. The Executive reports need to be streamlined so they are not duplicating Board and Union parliament reports.

b) New website/ digital platform proposal

A paper advised trustees that recently much work had gone into developing digital communication and functionalities. There were numerous challenges with the current website/digital platform provider and further progress in the digital sphere would be limited with the existing provider. The trustees were recommended a new platform and provider, which had followed tendering and review by staff.

The Board thanked Head of Membership for all their hard work and **agreed** that this was the direction to take.

c) Drafted Block Grant submission to University

The trustees had considered plans for the submission of the 2021-22 Block Grant proposal. The grant would account for the majority of Beds SU's income and provides funding to cover all core costs, including salaries of Executive Officers and staff for the forthcoming financial year.

Trustees reviewed the draft proposal, currently in review by senior UoB staff. The CEO introduced the item and offered commentary on the political/economic landscape of the bid.

The CEO advised the Board that the Block grant process was changing this year. The CEO, VC and Register are all going to meet to discuss the proposal before it goes to VECG and the Governors. There is a request for more money as the Block grant did not receive an uplift last year and salaries rose and there is a suggestion that they rise this year as well. The governors bought up our request for capital funding for last year and asked if it was coming back. VC has advised that they want to invest in Estates and that the SU could look better, not just in our venue but also our corridors, the resources that we are asking for are in

line with University drivers. We have a good Business case for the funding we are asking for and it is a modest request.

The Student Trustee advised that the current daytime campus provision at Bedford was not fit for purpose and was pleased to see that a request to tackle this was included in the Block grant request. They were advised that currently the only places students can meet at Bedford is at a commercial opportunity. We are trying to say we want to be present on Bedford campus, but we cannot make it commercially viable as the footfall is not constant.

The Board queried the prediction for getting the Block grant agreed and what the next steps would be if it wasn't approved.

11 AOB

Dates for 2021-22 Board meetings have been circulated among trustees by the CEO and no concerns had been raised. The dates were therefore set:

28 June 2021 (final date of 2020-21),

14 October 2021 – away day,

15 December 2021,

28 March 2022, 29 June 2022.

Date of Next Meeting 28th June 2021

Actions arising		
Action	By Whom	Completion Date
Student trustee recruitment is to be open next term.	AM/MM	30/6/21
Mary Holyoak to assist the Head of Communications to do a video to promote the opportunity to become a Student trustee.	MH/LR	30/6/21
An alternative system of Officer accountability introduced.	AM	Start next academic year
The Executive reports streamlined so they are not duplicating Board and Union parliament reports	AM	Start next academic