

Meeting Portal for London Metropolitan University

Meeting of the Board of Governors

MS Teams

Tuesday 5 May 2020, 1:00 PM — 3:30 PM BST

| | | |
|---------------------------|---|---|
| Governors present: | Lynn Dobbs Anders Krohn Baron Anyangwe Cathy McCabe Cecile Tschirhart Diini Muse Harini Iyengar Margaret Farragher Mark Anderson Michael Murphy Rolande Anderson Shefaly Yogendra Tim Cochrane Rosemary Benson Tricia Croasdell | Vice Chancellor Independent Governor Independent Governor Independent Governor Academic Governor Student Governor Independent Governor Independent Governor Chair of the Board Independent Governor Independent Governor Independent Governor Independent Governor Staff Governor Independent Governor |
| Also present: | Zainab Khan Urmi Dutta- Roy Mandy Bentham Nikki Le Faou Donna Whitehead Don MacRaild Chris Ince Eugene McCrossan Gary Davies | Pro Vice-Chancellor (Outcomes and Inclusion) Board Apprentice Director of Academic Quality and Development Assistant University Secretary Deputy Vice Chancellor Pro Vice Chancellor for Research and Knowledge Ex. University Secretary Chief Finance Officer Pro Vice Chancellor for Student Recruitment and Business Development |
| Apologies: | Renarta Guy | Independent Governor |

1 Welcome, Apologies, Announcements and Declarations of Interest

Apologies were received from Independent Governor Renarta Guy. Independent Governor Baron Anyangwe would join the call at 13:30.

Independent Governor Mark Anderson declared an interest as a non- executive Director of Higher Education Partnerships and as a fellow of Hughes Hall, University of Cambridge; Independent Governor Michael Murphy declared an interest as an adviser to Lodestone strategy and communications firm; Independent Governor Anders Krohn declared an interest as co-founder and CEO of Aula Education, a communication platform for education, and; Independent Governor Tim Cochrane declared an interest as his wife was a partner at EY.

1.1 Current Covid-19 situation, response to date and future planning - presentation

For Discussion - Presented by Lynn Dobbs

The Vice Chancellor provided the Board of Governors with a presentation regarding the University's response to Covid-19. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]. It was also noted that the University had been aware of one student who had been seriously unwell with Covid-19; contact with this student had been lost. The University was in the process of attempting to make contact with family members.

The key strands of the presentation included; the health of the academic community, our business model before Covid-19, the new external environment, minimising risk, delivering remotely, supporting students & staff, Estates, minimising risks, recruitment, business development, finances and the University's Strategic plan. Some of the key points noted as part of the presentation and subsequent discussion were as follows:

- Feedback from the Senior Management Team, who met fortnightly, had been that staff and student morale was currently good. Staff were positive and had approached the changing environment with a great attitude.
- The Government had announced a range of measures to provide support and stability to the Higher Education sector. The package measures under consideration included student number controls, as a temporary measure to let providers recruit full-time, domestic students up to 5% above their forecasts for the next academic year. Alongside the number control proposals, the Office for Students were consulting on the implementation of a temporary new registration condition to restrict competitive behavior that would destabilise the sector. The proscribed actions were likely to include offering gifts or discounts designed to attract students or changes to usual recruitment practices. Further analysis of the impact of the proposals would be undertaken and clarity sought as to how the 5% recruitment growth-cap would be calculated; this would form part of the next Board update.
- The University had responded swiftly to the developing situation and commenced early planning and preparations for PPE and remote delivery in January. While the University had sought to protect the business by delivering remotely, and well, without any gap in provision, its focus had also been on well-being. The University had been one of the first to send its staff and students home.
- The Board noted that remote delivery had included some redesign of programmes and requested additional information about alternative assessment arrangements which had been made on a 'no detriment' basis. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor provided the link to the University's 'no disadvantage' policy to Governors during the meeting which was available at [https://mailchi.mp/londonmet.ac.uk/actions-we-are-taking-to-ensure-that-you-are-not-academically-disadvantaged-due-to-the-covid-19-situation?e=\[UNIQID\]](https://mailchi.mp/londonmet.ac.uk/actions-we-are-taking-to-ensure-that-you-are-not-academically-disadvantaged-due-to-the-covid-19-situation?e=[UNIQID]).
- The Board noted the additional work undertaken by the University in support of students, which included the provision of equipment, remote support, and an increase in the hardship fund. Anecdotal evidence had demonstrated that students were positive about the support provided to them in response to Covid-19. However, given that many students had indicated difficulties in concentration and higher levels of financial and health anxiety, the Board requested that the University undertake a comprehensive staff and student survey.
- The University's buildings had all closed by 20 March 2020 since which time a small, rotating estates team had been onsite to ensure security and access for critical needs. Planning had commenced for future opening scenarios - the focus would be on re-opening essential areas first (e.g. the science Labs and the Cass) with extended opening hours to facilitate staggered attendance. The focus would be on staff and student safety and adherence to evolving Government guidelines.

- The University was developing plans for delivering teaching in 20/21 on a continuum, from full on-campus to full remote delivery. The detailed plans would be made available to the Board ahead of its June meeting.

- The University was planning to deliver the budget in line with Strategic Plan targets, however although it was expected that 19/20 would end with the £58.5m of cash as budgeted, the out turn involved some changes to income and expenditure. The Board confirmed it would be prudent to build a contingency into the budget for 20/21. The University was continuing its cost containment activity; further proposals would be submitted to the Finance and Resources Committee's June meeting.

- The University was continuing its work on the key strands of the Strategic Plan. In particular it was highlighted that the University's commitment to social justice across each of its strands was giving the University significant positive feedback from partners.

- The Chair of the Board advised that the minutes and action-log of the 'Gold Incident Management Team' had been shared with him on a regular basis. The Vice Chancellor, Chair of the Board and Committee Chairs had been in regular contact throughout the initial Covid-19 response period; issues had been disseminated to the wider Board as necessary.

Conclusions

The Board of Governors noted the report and thanked the Senior Leadership Team for their relentless activity in responding to the rapidly evolving environment as a result of Covid-19.

1.2 Student Recruitment & Financial sensitivity analysis - presentation

For Discussion - Presented by Gary Davies and Eugene McCrossan

The Pro Vice-Chancellor for Student Recruitment and Business Development provided the Board of Governors with an update on the University's student recruitment. It was noted that:

i) applications remained strong, and the University's work on conversion was paying dividends.

ii) The Business School continued to be the major component of the University's student recruitment in volume terms, however the Schools of Social Sciences and School of Computing and Digital Media were also performing well, with an increase in applications and acceptances.

iii) The University was continuing its engagement activity with prospective students as much as possible including via its agents, whilst avoiding overwhelming them. Recruitment events including UG and PG open days had moved online, and the University was seeing good engagements from potential students.

iv) An industry-leading partner operated the University's conversion activity, engagement activity was monitored and activity adjusted accordingly. The Board requested that the recruitment update table be included within their monthly update report.

v) The University was developing alternative online provision with an overseas partner, and would look to learn lessons from the experience of remote delivery to inform this work. It was confirmed that different modes and times of delivery to meet students' needs would be explored.

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The Board of Governors considered a Financial Sustainability update. Before the Covid-19 crisis, virtually all aspects of the financial plan were operating successfully. [REDACTED]

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In presenting the report the following was highlighted that:

i) Income generation had been directly affected by the University closure. Summer term activity had been cancelled for short courses and conference income would be lost. It was also likely that the University would see more of the October 2019 and February 2020 intake withdraw earlier than expected. [REDACTED]

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ii) The forecast pay bill based on the current rate of spend would be £0.4m below budget . The University continued to pay its entire staff, and was not utilising the Government's job retention scheme for eligible staff following updated guidance from the Department for Education. The companies that provided the cleaning, security and catering services had furloughed their staff. The company providing maintenance had not as although the service had reduced, it had continued. It was anticipated that approximately 400k of these cost savings might be recoverable by the university.

iii) General spending in the University had been slower than normal as a result of the building closure. Based on this cost reduction and the current rate of spend up to March 2020, £1.2m of savings against the Q2 forecast were expected to materialise. The University had agreed a number of measures to support staff and students following the physical closure, the costs of which amounted to an additional £0.4m. There would be one-off costs for the preparation of reopening the sites for new ways of working to include preparing buildings for new ways of working, people flow and signage. It was likely that the cost of this would be £0.2m. The net position would leave a modest non-pay cost saving of £0.6m.

iv) The University capital programme had slowed significantly, and was likely to return savings against the budget of £3m.

[REDACTED]

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The Board requested that the presentation of the budget within the management accounts be revised to present the total benefit of partnerships clearly and to better present the relevant income and expenditure.

The Board considered the scenario modelling for FY21 outlined within the report, and requested that a monitoring process to identify early indicators and signposts should be developed. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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The Board requested that the same scenario planning approach be adopted future years. The Board

was required to set a budget at its June meeting for operational purposes. The Board requested that the budget be drafted to include a contingency. It was acknowledged that given the circumstances it was likely that within three months of the new financial year there would be variances to the set budget, which would require a rapid reforecast and re-presentation of the budget to the Board.

Conclusions

The Board considered the student recruitment and financial sensitivity analysis.

1.3 Future Board meetings, decision making and communications

For Discussion - Presented by Mark Anderson and Chris Ince

The Board considered a report which sought a steer on scheduling of future meetings, decision making and communications. Board members were already receiving regular emails from the Vice Chancellor to staff and students. Given the current situation, a monthly report to the Board on key activities tailored to the Board would be adopted. The Board agreed that the Board reports should focus on the following:

- Coronavirus response + key risks at the moment (to include RAG format)
- Finances & student recruitment (to include partnerships)
- Academic matters
- Our staff and students (to include mental health/wellbeing & student complaints)
- OfS & regulatory/governance matters
- Other updates

The Board requested that the University Secretary's Office set some placeholder dates for Board of Governor meetings in July, August and September in case any urgent decisions on matters reserved to the Board were required in the coming months.

Conclusions

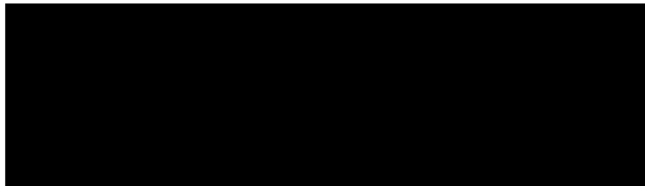
The Board considered the report and requested that provisional meeting dates be set to enable the Board to respond to any urgent matters during the Covid-19 period.

2 Any Other Business and Close

The Board encouraged the University's marketing and communication function to undertake some work around staff and student sentiment in the coming months, which would enable the University to collect valuable feedback.

The Students' Union President advised that SU awards would take place online on 7 May 2020, the Board were invited to join the event via the Students' Union website.

| Item | Paragraph | For action by who | By when | Update on action |
|--|--|-------------------|-------------------------|------------------|
| Student Recruitment & Financial sensitivity analysis – presentation | Board requested that the University undertake a comprehensive staff and student survey. | SLT | - | On agenda |
| Student Recruitment & Financial sensitivity analysis – presentation | The Board requested that the presentation of the budget within the management accounts be revised to present the total benefit of partnerships clearly and to reduce the distortion in the presentation of non-pay expenditure. | CFO | May Management accounts | On agenda |
| Student Recruitment & Financial sensitivity analysis - presentation | The Board requested that the budget be drafted to include a contingency. | CFO | June Board. | On agenda |
| Future Board meetings, decision making and communications | The Board requested that the University Secretary's Office set some placeholder dates for Board of Governor meetings in July, August and September in case any urgent decisions on matters reserved to the Board were required in the coming months. | US | ASAP after meeting | Complete |



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