

**Minutes of the twenty fifth Special meeting of the Board of Governors  
held on 6 February 2008**

**Present:** Peter Anwyl, Chair

|                             |              |
|-----------------------------|--------------|
| Graham Castle               | Abdul Rahim  |
| John Gabriel                | Brian Roper  |
| Jeremy Mayhew               | Finlay Scott |
| Bob Morgan                  | Abu Shohid   |
| Professor Zenobia Nadirshaw | Sarah Tyacke |

**Clerk to the Board:** John McParland

|                       |             |               |
|-----------------------|-------------|---------------|
| <b>In attendance:</b> | Bob Aylett  | Pam Nelson    |
|                       | Lyn Link    | Rachel Thomas |
|                       | Paul Lister |               |

**Apologies:** Jon Alsbury, John Haworth, Stephan John, Raj Patel,  
Michael Snyder

**344. Minutes of the meeting held on 12 December 2007**  
(Agenda item BG 25/1)

The Minutes of the meeting on 12 December 2007 were confirmed as a correct record.

**345. University's Final Accounts 2006/07**

The Board received an oral report on the current position regarding the HEFCE holdback from the Vice-Chancellor.

It was noted that a meeting had taken place on 5 February 2008 with representatives from HEFCE including its Chief Executive and

members of the University's Senior Team. The University had a distinctive student profile which was not adequately recognized in the application of the current funding method. HEFCE had expressed the view that it would be helpful for the University to be involved in future funding policy development discussions on this issue. HEFCE acknowledged that further technical resources were required to unravel this problem and offered assistance to the University. The meeting was advised that the University's Governors had been and would continue to be fully apprised of the holdback issue.

It was also noted that the implications of the holdback issue would need to be at the top of the risk register together with the proposed funding changes for Equivalent or Lower Qualifications (ELQs). The University was working towards producing an exemption list of subject areas for ELQs in order to reduce the estimated £6m p.a. loss of funding.

It was noted that the University was hopeful that the holdback issue would be resolved in the near future. It was in the interests of both the University and HEFCE to resolve the problem as soon as possible so that the Final Accounts for 2006/07 could be submitted to and approved by the March 2008 Board.

**346. University's Strategic Plan**  
(Agenda item BG 25/3)

The Board received the report on the Strategic Plan Review together with a paper which set out the principles proposed to underpin the Plan including the mission and Educational Character of the University. The Board also noted the process to be followed.

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) outlined the strategic background post and pre-merger, the current HE context and the significant environmental developments which had impacted on the University more widely. He pointed out that the principle changes envisaged were those set out in bold in the paper. He explained that the core commitment of the University, its mission and character remained unchanged but there was an underlying message that the University was not as effective and efficient as it should be in delivery and there were clearly efficiency measures which could be put in place, including exploring ways of managing and improving current systems to eliminate duplication and overlaps.

The two main core issues were:

**1. Widening Participation.**

Understanding the implications of the widening participation agenda for the University.

**2. Performance Management**

It was noted that 60% of the University's expenditure was on staff costs, and performance issues in this area needed to be addressed.

The following points were noted:

- The decline in UK student recruitment was a trend which must be rectified
- That it was timely for the University to revisit its research strategy
- That the widening participation agenda needed to be reviewed. The University should not be complacent because of its location and should be more proactive within the UK and outside London. More job offers were needed for students, increased work placement, more funding from businesses and more engagement with the commercial world.
- That access to information was crucial for the effectiveness of the University. It must develop the capacity to generate data and analysis well beyond the range normally required for reporting purposes for external agencies. The development of an intelligence unit, with the assessment capability normally taken for granted in the US, to provide an immediate high level of analytical data should be considered.
- That it was important not to lose sight of the University's current mission as it could lose its distinctiveness and become like other mainstream Universities. The University historically was not a research based University and should be clear about its research agenda being cognate with its core mission.
- That it was important to be committed to responding to students' needs. It was noted that an analysis by department of the National Student Survey data would be posted on the Governor's

intranet.

**(Action: Secretary and Clerk to the Board)**

- That the presentation of widening participation needed to be changed, the core ambition of opening up education opportunities for those who were disadvantaged remains, but new ways need to be found to describe this initiative. The University should continue to embrace the widening participation agenda, whilst at the same time providing a high quality education and improvement against benchmarks.
- That widening participation students were resource intensive and students from disadvantaged backgrounds had a lower retention rate. Improving this would assist with some of the financial issues.
- That it would also be necessary to find ways of decreasing reliance on Government funding especially given the current issues surrounding HEFCE holdback and future changes to funding methodology (ELQs).
- That the University's research strategy needed to be refreshed. The widening participation agenda had created a new generation of researchers in very different areas. For example applied research could now be extended to social issues like housing. Taught doctorates and professional qualifications were the new growth areas.
- That e-learning could enable courses to be extended to the workplace. The University was already a recognised National Centre of excellence in this field and further collaboration with external organizations was possible.
- That the size of the University should be considered during the planning process
- That the University had an excellent track record as measured by external agencies, such as HEFCE, the QAA, MSCHE and various professional and statutory bodies, including excellent external examiner reports. However, this did not reflect the outcome of the recent National Student Survey results. It was

noted that the University needed the confidence and support of all its key interests, ie students, employers and the community as commanding confidence would lead to economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

- That there should be a three stage process:
  - a) Formulation of the principles underpinning the Plan
  - b) Engagement with key interests on these ideas
  - c) Consultation on the proposed Plan
  
- That the strategy should be written in plain English

The Board re-affirmed the Character and Mission of the University as presented.

The Board agreed the process and the consultation arrangements for the Strategic Plan Review, subject to considering the three stage process set out above.

### **347. Date of Next Meeting**

It was noted that the next scheduled meeting of the Board would be held on Wednesday 19 March 2008, 8<sup>th</sup> Floor Boardroom, Technology Tower, Holloway Road (North Campus) at 5pm.