




---

**Board of Governors**

**12 May 2015**

---

**Minutes of the 75<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Board of Governors  
held on Thursday 12 May 2015 (5.00pm – 7.40pm)**

---

**Governors present:**

Mr Clive Jones, Chair  
 Ms Rolande Anderson  
 Professor Kathy Castle  
 Ms Pauline Curtis  
 Mr Emir Feisal  
 Mr Rob Hull, Vice Chair  
 Ms Maureen Laurie  
 Mr Anthony Millns  
 Ms Ann Minogue, Vice Chair (for part)  
 Mr Daleep Mukarji  
 Professor Robert Mull, Dean, Cass Faculty  
 Mr Michael Murphy (via telephone)  
 Mr Obie Opara, President, Students' Union  
 Professor John Raftery, Vice Chancellor  
 Ms Cathy Sullivan  
 Professor Dianne Willcocks

**In attendance:**

Mr Paul Bowler (Deputy Chief Executive)  
 Ms Lynn Burke (Director, Office of  
 Institutional Effectiveness)  
 Mr Peter Garrod (University Secretary and  
 Clerk to the Board of Governors)

  
 Prof. Robert Mull (Dean, CASS Faculty)  
 Ms Pam Nelson (Director of Finance)  
 Ms Siobhan O'Donoghue (Assistant  
 University Secretary)

s.43(2) FOIA -  
commercially sensitive

**Welcome, Apologies and Announcements****Oral**

1. The Chair welcomed Governors and attendees to the meeting.
  - a. Recently appointed Governors Rolande Anderson and Pauline Curtis were welcomed to their first meeting.
  - b. Professor Robert Mull, Dean of the Cass Faculty of Art, Architecture and Design, was welcomed to the meeting. On behalf of the Board, the Chair thanked Professor Mull for his presentation and tour of Central House, which had taken place prior to the meeting.
  - c. 

s.43(2) FOIA - commercially  
sensitive

**Declarations of Interest****Oral**

2. There were no declarations of interest.

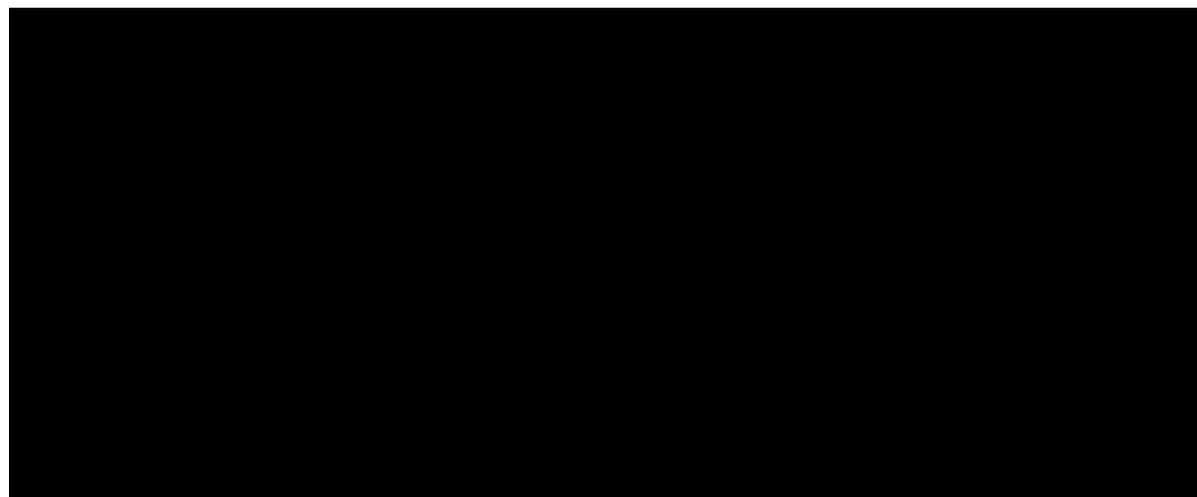
**Minutes of the last meeting and Matters Arising****BG 75/3.1**

3. The Board of Governors:
- a. **approved** the minutes of the last Board meeting held on 23 March 2015 as a correct record; and
  - b. **noted** the table of updates on actions arising from the last meeting that were not dealt with elsewhere on the agenda.

**Vice Chancellor's General Report to the Board and Quarterly Report to HEFCE and the Board****BG 75/2.1 and BG 75/2.2**

4. The Board agreed to consider the Vice Chancellor's general report and his quarterly report to HEFCE and the Board as part of the same discussion. The Board focussed on the following issues:
5. UK Visas and Immigration Tier 4 Licensing: In addition to the UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) update in the report, the Board noted that the University had been subject to a spot-check audit of its compliance with UKVI regulations, which had included a short-notice, on-site, review of records and attendance monitoring. Although UKVI's audit report had not yet been issued, the Board was pleased to note the informal feedback that there were no areas of concern and that the University's record-keeping was of a very high standard. The Vice Chancellor took the opportunity to record his appreciation to those staff who had assisted UKVI with its audit, and the efforts of staff across the University more generally who ensured compliance was taken seriously.

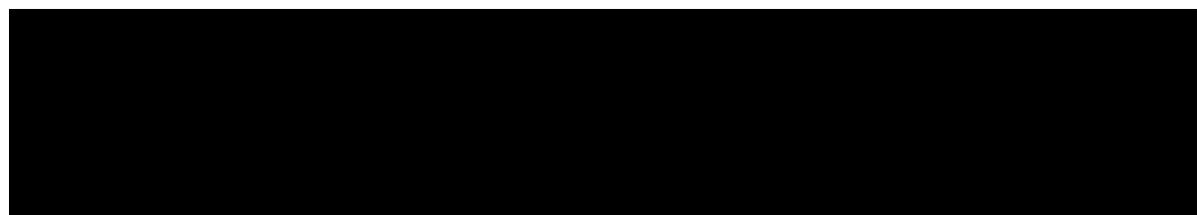
6.

s.43(2) FOIA -  
commercially sensitive

7.

s.43(2) FOIA -  
commercially sensitive

8.

s.43(2) FOIA -  
commercially sensitive

9. The Board concluded that the reality of the environment was likely to become clearer over the coming days and weeks as the new government was formed, following the 7 May 2015 general election. Good relations with new personnel in the relevant departments would be important and some thought should be given to how this might be approached.
10. Investment in Marketing: The Vice Chancellor thanked those Governors who had been involved with scrutinising and approving the marketing project, following the approval of funding at the March 2015 Board meeting. The panel of Governors had been impressed with the detail and focus of the presentation given by the Director of External Relations, and had been assured that the implementation and impact of the project would be subject to strict monitoring.
11. Update on Section 188s: The statutory consultation period with staff and recognised trades unions had closed on 1 May 2015. Outcome reports were being finalised and proposals that had been put forward during the consultation – including those submitted by UNISON and UCU – would be factored in to these reports. The Deputy Chief Executive reported that both UNISON and UCU were in the process of balloting members on industrial action. The Board noted that the University had to be given seven days' notice of any action and that management was drawing up contingency plans that would come into effect in the event of any strike, or action short of a strike.
12. As UCU had an agreed protocol for the resolution of disputes, a Disputes Panel meeting had been called in accordance with that procedure and would take place on 20 May 2015, involving the Chair of the Board of Governors and Governors Rob Hull and Maureen Laurie. As UNISON had no such protocol, the Board agreed that it was not possible or appropriate for the University to engage with UNISON in the same way.
13. A Governor reiterated the points made in the written submissions from UNISON and UCU – both of which had been circulated to Governors and copies of which were available at the meeting – including the perceived flaws and risks of the proposed reductions, particularly in the Guildhall Faculty of Business and Law; and also drew attention to comments appended to the 'open letter' from staff and student members of the University and the wider community.
14. Amongst the issues raised by the Governor was the negative impact the headcount reduction exercise would have on the current staff to student ratio (SSR), which was above the benchmark for competitor universities. Other Governors made the point that, based on the Tribal benchmarking data and also HEFCE's own data, London Met's staff costs as a percentage of income were significantly higher than the sector average. The Tribal analysis suggested that other similar universities in London were, in effect, able to teach an equivalent number of students with fewer staff. Despite London Met's spend and its high SSR, it was at the lower end of league tables and rankings of academic quality, including those relating to the teaching experience. The Section 188 headcount reduction exercise would simply bring London Met closer to the average in terms of its staff costs.

15. The Vice Chancellor re-iterated the fundamental message, which was also set out in the 2015-20 Strategic Plan White Paper and the report on Project Oak Tree elsewhere on the agenda: in order for the University to be sustainable, there needed to be rapid and sustained improvement to its core financial and academic performance. The staff reduction exercise itself would not do this, but it would help afford the University the opportunity it needed to be able to do so. Performance needed to stabilise, and then improve, to make the University a more attractive choice for potential students.
16. The Board agreed that, as the formal process was still underway and the final outcome of the s.188 exercise was not yet known, it was not appropriate to pursue a detailed discussion at this meeting. Furthermore, the Board had made it clear previously that it would not involve itself in the day to day operation of the University or in the detail of industrial relations.
17. Review of Management Structures and Leadership roles: As had been indicated at the last Board meeting, the Vice Chancellor was committed to reviewing academic leadership roles and management structures to ensure that they were optimised. The Board noted the update on the proposed review including the proposals for a 'task and finish' group, its terms of reference, and the implementation timetable.
18. March 2015 HEFCE Grant Letter: In response to a Governor's query, it was explained that, although the HEFCE grant allocation was better than the estimated figure used for the January 2015 financial forecast, HEFCE had indicated that grant allocations were subject to review after the general election.

19. The Board of Governors:
  - a. **noted** the Vice Chancellor's General Report to the Board; and
  - b. **noted** the Vice Chancellor's Quarterly Report to HEFCE and the Board.

### **Student Governor's General Report to the Board**

**BG 75/3**

20. The Student Governor introduced his standing report to the Board.
21. Students' Union (SU) elections: As reported at the last Board meeting in March 2015, this year's SU election had been a success, with a record turnout for recent years and nearly double the number of eligible voters participating, compared to the previous year. The Board congratulated the Student Governor, not only on his own successful re-election as SU President, but on the success of this year's election overall. The increased turnout and the spread across all Faculties was encouraging.
22. Teaching Awards: The Student Governor thanked the Vice Chancellor, Vice Chair, Deputy Vice Chancellor and the University Secretary for their support and attendance at the recent Students' Union and student-led Teaching Awards ceremony.

23. National Survey Results: It was noted that London Met's Students' Union had increased its overall score and also moved up the relevant ranking of the Times Higher Education Survey. It was hoped that this improvement would also be reflected in the National Student Survey.
24. Other Students' Union Activity: The SU continued to engage actively with University management on a number of issues, including the development of the Freshers' Fair, the role of social sport, and its submission to the Strategic Plan White Paper. The Vice Chancellor thanked the Student President for the SU's thoughtful and considered responses throughout the Strategic Plan consultation process and encouraged the positive engagement to continue. The qualitative 'clipboard' research conducted by the Students' Union to gather student opinion had been particularly insightful. The Vice Chancellor also remarked that the student-led organisation of a fundraising event in response to the earthquake in Nepal had been impressive and that the event itself had been a great success.

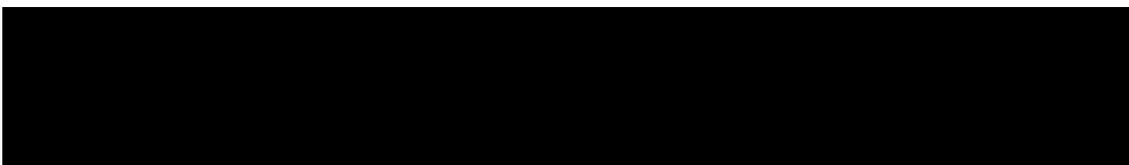
25. The Board of Governors **noted** the Student Governor's general report.

### Update on Student Recruitment and Enrolment

**BG 75/4.1**

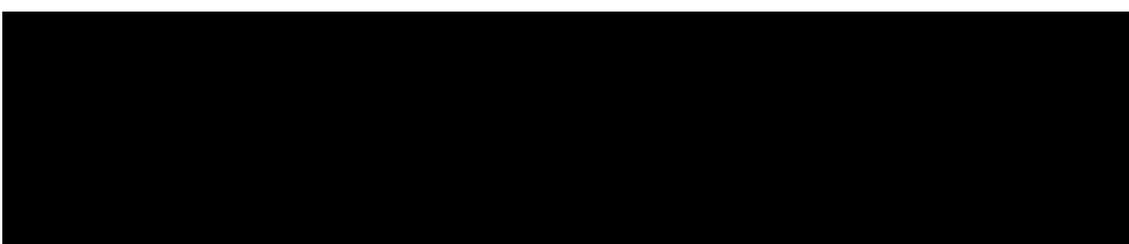
26. The Director of the Office of Institutional Effectiveness presented the regular Board report summarising student recruitment and retention figures and activity. The headline messages were as follows:

a.



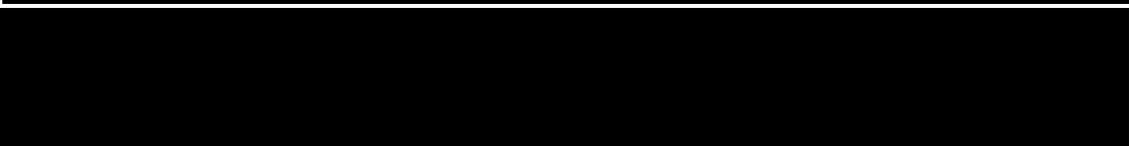
s.43(2) FOIA -  
commercially sensitive

b.



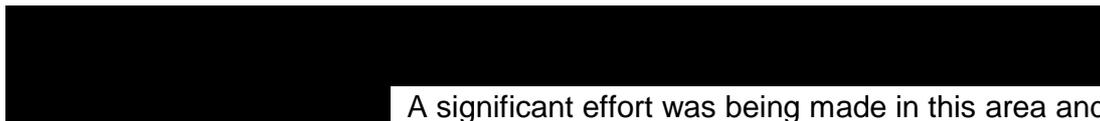
s.43(2) FOIA -  
commercially sensitive

c.



s.43(2) FOIA -  
commercially sensitive

d.



s.43(2) FOIA -  
commercially sensitive

A significant effort was being made in this area and the University's Recruitment and Retention Group had been convened earlier than usual in the cycle to monitor the progress on recruitment and retention targets. The University was in direct, named contact with all outstanding offers.

- e. It was confirmed that, where London Met's offers had not been accepted, the University had surveyed applicants to find out what had influenced their decision and what offer they had ultimately accepted. Typically, the reasons cited were around the course offered and reputation.
- f. It was noted that there was additional competition from other institutions, now that restrictions on student numbers had been lifted. This had impacted on the University's traditional student market, although this 'suck up' effect was not unique to London Met.
- g. The return from the marketing investment, discussed earlier in the meeting, would not be evident for some time, and Governors discussed the difficulty there might be in being able to attribute outcomes to this investment. It was noted that there was a focus on addressing London Met's reputational legacy, with a concerted effort being made to share positive stories and updates about London Met and its people, both externally and internally.

27. The Board of Governors **noted** the update on student recruitment and enrolment.

### Update on Project Oak Tree

**BG 75/4.2**

- 28. The Deputy Chief Executive introduced the update on Project Oak Tree, which had been considered and approved by the Finance and Resources Committee, and subsequently considered by the Board, in March 2015. The Board was reminded that the scope of Oak Tree went beyond that of an estate strategy. It was central to the University's strategic aims and fundamental to scenario planning. It would address the future size and shape of the University; the infrastructure that this would require; the transition to this new size, shape and infrastructure; and also how it would be financed.
- 29. A range of factors would underpin the strategic decisions required. These included: defining a realistic and sustainable student number target; 'brand' issues, including the significance of the location of Faculties and their ties with areas or other institutions; a detailed, medium-term transition plan, which would address a range of issues from the practicalities of relocation to public relations; the approach to financing the project, [REDACTED] and the impact all these factors would have on the student experience whilst the transformation was taking place.
- 30. Given the extent and scope of the project, a procurement project to appoint an external consultant to advise the University was underway, and a procurement panel, which included one of the Vice Chairs, had met on 5 and 6 May 2015 to consider presentations from shortlisted applicants. Following the selection of Ernst and Young (EY), the details of the contract were now being finalised. The Deputy Chief Executive reported that the consultant leading the EY project had a detailed knowledge of the higher education sector and had worked successfully with London Met on projects previously. EY's role would be to analyse and synthesise a wide range of information in order to help lead the University towards a range of recommendations for the Board to consider. The Vice Chancellor stressed the

s.43(2) FOIA -  
commercially sensitive

importance of Oak Tree and reiterated the message that this was not simply about estates. Furthermore, decisions would not be made on a financial basis alone: there were significant academic and cultural issues to consider alongside the financial ones.

31. The detail of the project timeline was still being finalised, but it was anticipated that the Finance and Resources Committee would receive the proposed project plan at its meeting on 23 June 2015. The Board would receive a presentation from EY at its next business meeting on 2 July 2015, with firm recommendations being prepared for submission to the October 2015 Board meeting.
32. The Board thanked the Deputy Chief Executive for the update and overview. Given that it was typical in other universities for such projects to take six months or longer, it was clear that the timetable was aggressive. It would be essential that staff, as well as the external advisers, were focused entirely on Oak Tree; and that the relevant information would be accessible, reliable and made available in a timely manner. Given the potential impact and the irreversible nature of some of the decisions that the Board might be required to take, the Chair made clear that the Board would not agree to any recommendations that appeared to have been based on poor information. Decisions would also need to be able to withstand scrutiny and challenge from a range of stakeholders.
33. In response to queries from Governors about how the Strategic Plan and Oak Tree would be developed in tandem, the Vice Chancellor explained that the Strategic Plan White Paper set broad objectives relating to financial and academic sustainability that were not dependent on the outcome of Oak Tree, which was part of the process of implementation.
34. In response to a Governor's suggestion, the University Secretary's Office would review arrangements for maintaining a register of interests for senior management. The Governance Committee would consider amendments to the current approach if this was appropriate.

|   |
|---|
| 35. The Board of Governors <b>noted</b> the update on Project Oak Tree. |
|---|

### Strategic Plan 2015-20 – Draft White Paper

**BG 75/5**

36. The Vice Chancellor introduced the White Paper (draft Strategic Plan 2015-2020), which had been circulated previously to Governors and co-opted members of the Board's committees on 30 April 2015, as part of the wider consultation process. The consultation was due to close on 29 May 2015 and the final Strategic Plan would be presented to the Board for approval at its meeting on 2 July 2015.
37. The following points were raised during the Board's discussion:
  - a. The Board noted that the 'Points of Departure' section and Performance Indicator tables would not be part of the final Strategic Plan, but they were important to include at this stage. The Performance Indicator tables would be used for internal monitoring.

- b. The Strategic Plan had to set out clearly London Met's unique offer to students. As such, work was underway to develop a series of key 'promises' to students that would be part of the Strategic Plan, and could be deployed in conversations and as part of the University's offer to potential students.
  - c. Performance indicators would need to be kept under review to ensure they remained relevant and appropriate. It was suggested that, as well as looking at immediate priorities, there could also be medium and longer-term targets and information about how these would be achieved. Process targets and qualitative indicator targets were also important.
  - d. It was suggested that the academic vision for the University presented in the White Paper could be developed further. The University needed to be clear on what it was trying to do (its mission) and needed to present a clear proposition to students on why they should come to London Met.
  - e. There was a strong sense of pride in London Met and its mission: the White Paper could put more emphasis on the fact that the mission remained, essentially, unchanged.
  - f. The Vice Chancellor explained that considerable thought had been given to how ambitious – or aspirational – the Strategic Plan should be. It had to be aspirational enough to excite staff, attract and inspire students, and keep momentum for five years; but it also had to be honest about the current position and realistic about what could be achieved in the short, medium and longer term. The reality was that, from the University's current position, it would take considerable and sustained effort, cooperation, goodwill and time to move towards average performance for the HE sector.
  - g. Regarding the teaching assessment proposals, there was some concern that staff would interpret this as being watched and held to account. It was pointed out, however, that observation of teaching was commonplace and that this was merely a return to best practice that might have dropped off in some areas, or was not being applied consistently. It was not the case that course monitoring was not currently taking place. The Vice Chancellor added that the teaching assessment could be contextualised and adapted within each Faculty, but that, generally, this was a non-negotiable commitment. There needed to be a profound and fearless analysis of the University's activities, and where there were concerns, these had to be addressed.
  - h. It would be important to have effective, bespoke communication plans for external and internal audiences. There needed to be buy-in and enthusiasm from staff across Faculties and PSDs. How the Plan would be articulated to future students would also be of great importance.
38. The Board welcomed the White Paper and thanked those involved for developing the Strategic Plan to this point. It was an excellent basis for developing the strategy and its honesty was refreshing.

39. The Strategic Plan would continue to be developed in light of responses received to the White Paper consultation; and the Board would discuss the draft Strategic Plan in detail at its Strategy Day on 4 June 2015. Overall, the Board was largely content with the Strategic Plan in its current form. Going forward, the Board would expect the executive's attention to shift to setting out how the Strategic Plan would be implemented and developing a rolling operational and monitoring plan.

40. The Board of Governors **noted** the Strategic Plan White Paper.

### HEFCE's Assessment of Institutional Risk

**BG 75/6.1**

41. The Vice Chancellor presented HEFCE's annual letter setting out its assessment of institutional risk for the University. [REDACTED]

s.43(2) FOIA -  
commercially sensitive

The letter reiterated that HEFCE wished to see the University's Strategic Plan developed and produced as a priority; [REDACTED]

s.43(2) FOIA -  
commercially sensitive

42. The Chair commented that the draft Strategic Plan was progressing to the original agreed timescale and that it was now a case of final refinements and the development of implementation plans. Nevertheless, the Vice Chancellor was encouraged to keep HEFCE informed of progress, and to also stress the momentum and holistic approach of Project Oak Tree.

43. The Board of Governors **received** HEFCE's annual assessment of institutional risk.

### Met2020

**BG 75/6.2**

44. The Board received the latest update on Met2020, noting in particular that the sixth round of bidding had been completed; and that the convening of the University's Recruitment and Retention Group had been brought forward to set, monitor and progress recruitment and retention targets, including implementation of the new marketing and outreach initiative.

45. The Board of Governors **noted** the Met2020 update.

### 14 April 2015 Health and Safety Assurance Group – Meeting Report

**BG 75/6.3**

46. The Chair of the Health and Safety Assurance Group (HSAG) presented the meeting report, summarising the issues considered at the meeting on 14 April 2015. The main item of business had been the findings of a review of health and safety governance arrangements, along with suggested options for change and improvement. The Board noted that HSAG had felt that the current arrangements worked well, but that a further review, once the new Chairs of the Audit Committee and HSAG were in place, was a sensible way forward. A number of other good

governance practice amendments were agreed, which would be taken forward by the University Secretary's Office.

47. The meeting had been the last to be chaired by Daleep Mukarji, whose term as Governor ended in August 2015. The Board of Governors expressed their appreciation and thanks to Daleep for his work as Chair of HSAG.

48. The Board of Governors **noted** the report from the 14 April 2015 meeting of the Health and Safety Assurance Group.

#### **Any Other Business**

**Oral**

49. There were no further items of business.

#### **Dates of Future Meetings**

**Oral**

50. The Board noted the dates of future meetings of the Board of Governors.

**Siobhan O'Donoghue**  
**May 2015**

| Item  | Para / Action   | For action by who    | To be actioned by when           | Update on action (as at 19.06.15)   |
|---|---|----------------------|----------------------------------|---|
| BG 75/2.2<br>VC's Report to HEFCE and the Board | <br>s.43(2) FOIA - commercially sensitive |                      |                                  | <i>See BG 76/2.1, Vice Chancellor's Report, elsewhere on the agenda.</i>                |
| BG 75/4.2<br>Project Oak Tree                   | Para. 31) Board to receive presentation from EY at its next meeting.  | Deputy Chief Exec.   | 2 July 2015 meeting              | <i>See presentation from Ernst and Young elsewhere on the agenda.</i>                   |
| BG 75/4.2<br>Project Oak Tree                   | Para. 34) Arrangements for senior management registers of interest to be reviewed.  | University Secretary | At a future Governance Committee | <i>Governance Committee to consider arrangements at its meeting on 20 October 2015.</i> |
| BG 75/5<br>White Paper                          | Para.36) Final Strategic Plan to be signed-off at next Board meeting.   | Vice Chancellor      | 2 July 2015 meeting              | <i>See BG 76/5.1, Strategic Plan 2015-20, elsewhere on the agenda.</i>                  |