

Kingston University London

MINUTES BOARD OF GOVERNORS

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS HELD ON WEDNESDAY 16 JULY 2008 IN THE TOWN HOUSE, PENRHYN ROAD CENTRE

Present:

Gren Collings (Chair), George Alexandrou, Nicholas Badman, Olrick Coker, Ann Corrigan, Stephen Cox, Sara Drake, Deirdre Ferrier, Robert Green, Mark Kierstan, Stephen King, Peter Kopelman, Andrew Lomax, Roderic Lyne, Thalia Marriott, Phil Molyneux, Tim Oliver, Peter Scott, Christine Swabey, David Taylor, Colin Watts and Clarissa Wilks

In attendance:

Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Employer Engagement), Pro Vice-Chancellor (External Affairs), Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research & Enterprise), Finance Director, University Secretary, Head of Secretariat, Minuting Clerk

43.0 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from Derek Osbourne and David Reardon.

44.0 Minutes of the Board of Governors Meeting held on 21 May 2008

44.1 The Minutes were approved.

45.0 Matters Arising

45.1 The Chair confirmed that the Surrey Club lease and the Mace contract had now been signed. These had previously been approved by the Board at its meetings in May and March 2008 respectively.

45.2 There were no other matters arising.

46.0 Approval of the External Auditors' Strategy for the year ending 31 July 2008, on the recommendation of the Audit Committee
(Paper BG 66/08)

46.1 David Taylor, as Chair of the Audit Committee, reported that the External Auditors' Strategy had been discussed in detail at the Audit Committee meeting on 8 May 2008, and had been recommended for Board approval.

It was resolved

That the Board approve the External Auditors' Strategy for the year ending 31 July 2008, on the recommendation of the Audit Committee

47.0 Approval of the Student Complaints Procedure
(Paper BG 67/08)

47.1 The Board received, for approval, a revised Student Complaints Procedure which the Deputy Vice-Chancellor reported had been produced as part of an ongoing process of review. The Procedure had last been reviewed in 2005. It was noted that the Board had approved a revised Student Disciplinary Procedure at its last meeting in May 2008. A paper would be presented to the Board in the autumn dealing with academic misconduct.

47.2 The Student Complaints Procedure had been revised in the light of the University's experience in recent years. The main reason for the revision was to ensure that there was a clear procedure in place, with an increased emphasis on mediation and resolution at as early a stage as possible in the process.

47.3 The University Secretary noted that the fundamental structure of the Procedure was unchanged and that the revisions served to ensure continuing good practice. A significant reform of the Procedure was the clarification of the relationship between overlapping procedures, such as student complaints, regulations relating to halls of residence and staff discipline.

47.4 It was noted that the Students Complaints Procedure would be monitored annually.

47.5 The Board commended the short guides to the Procedure for staff and students as being particularly helpful.

47.6 It was felt that the complaints process was generally well managed, and whilst there were a number of informal complaints at a low level, it was noted that relatively few formal complaints were made. In the current year, only one case had been taken to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator in which the OIA found against the University.

- 47.7 It was important that feedback from cases of complaint was analysed and used to address relevant issues in order to enhance the student experience. It was confirmed that the Quality Enhancement Committee, which was part of the University's assurance framework, reported on this issue and instigated appropriate changes. One such change was the introduction of a named individual in each faculty, to deal with cases of complaint.

It was resolved that

The Board approve the Student Complaints Procedure

Action *Review of Student Complaints Procedure in May 2009
(Deputy Vice-Chancellor)*

48.0 Approval of lease in respect of student accommodation (Paper BG 68/08)

- 48.1 The Board received, for approval, a proposal that the University enter into a one-year contract with a third party developer, IQ Property Partnership, for the lease of newly built student accommodation with 220 residential spaces at a rental figure of £1.4 million. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor assured the Board that this proposal was integral to the University's accommodation strategy, noting that there was a current shortfall of approximately 2500 places as a result of growth in student numbers. This proposal of a sub-lease from a private developer was a new type of venture and provided a mix of high quality accommodation.
- 48.2 The University Secretary noted that the issue of student accommodation was included in the overall Campus Development Plan (CDP) and further proposals were likely to be presented to the Board over the next academic year, including extension of existing sites or new builds, as well as partnership with third parties. A key element of the University's strategy for residential accommodation was to have a range of different types of accommodation to cater for the varied needs of students.
- 48.3 The Finance Director reported that the offer made to the University was for a 12-month lease on a 50 week licence rather than the usual 40 week period. A discount of £130k, equating to 9%, had been negotiated which would provide some protection in the event of space left unfilled. There was no long term commitment beyond the 12 months, although it was anticipated that the lease could be extended for further periods if required. The initial lease would be a trial period and act as a gauge for similar future initiatives.
- 48.4 It was noted that it was more advantageous for the University to use its own funding, where borrowing levels were monitored by HEFCE, for academic development and where possible acquire residential property through relationships with external developers.

- 48.5 The developer's halls management policy would apply, which was similar to that of the University. This position would be properly communicated to students applying for places in the building.
- 48.6 It was not anticipated that there would be any difficulty filling the places, bearing in mind the annual excess of demand over supply. This development was likely to appeal particularly to overseas and post-graduate students who frequently required a longer period of residence. In the unlikely event it was not possible to let all the space then it might be possible to do so to students from other institutions. However, planning restrictions designated the accommodation as for student use only.

It was resolved that

The Board approve the lease of additional student accommodation for one year in the first instance, at a rental of £1.4 million, as set out in paper BG 68/08.

49.0 Approval of funding relating to Kingston International Study Centre (Paper BG 69/08)

- 49.1 The Pro Vice-Chancellor, External Relations presented paper BG 69/08 which related to a proposed initiative between the University and a private company, Study Group International, to recruit international students for foundation courses at the University.
- 49.2 Increasing the number of overseas students was an important element of the University's financial strategy and a number of methods were being developed to achieve this objective. This included the use of agencies and international offices overseas, and a recent significant initiative was the establishment of foundation courses. There were several private providers of such foundation courses, including Study Group, which was seeking to establish between ten and twelve International Study Centres across the UK.
- 49.3 The proposed venture would be branded under the University's name and would provide foundation programmes across a number of pathways aimed at progressing to Kingston degree courses. Pre-masters degree programmes were also under consideration. Suitable space had been identified for the venture at the Kingston Hill campus.
- 49.4 The proposal had undergone comprehensive internal scrutiny and had been considered in detail by the Executive Board.
- 49.5 An important feature of the proposed venture was the expectation that the foundation courses would lead directly to Kingston degree programmes, rather than provide a springboard to other HEIs. In line with this objective, students would be registered as Kingston students on Kingston programmes, with the aim of building a strong relationship with the University. An anticipated progression rate of 60% had been included in the proposal.

- 49.6 It was planned that the programme would start in 2009 with 50 places, building up to 250 over five years. It was important to ensure the provision of good quality accommodation on site and this issue would be incorporated into the University's accommodation strategy. The Board also noted the requirement for the University to provide suitable teaching space for the Centre and the possible impact this could have on other users.
- 49.7 The Board considered the issue of quality control. It was noted that, whilst the courses would be taught by Study Group, they would be validated and monitored for quality by the University. It was important to note that organisations providing such initiatives would naturally be commercially driven and it would therefore be essential to ensure clarity on all academic and administrative arrangements. It was confirmed that the University would retain overall control over the quality of provision, as it did with its franchised courses.
- 49.8 The potential financial benefit to the University, based on progression of 60%, would be a net figure of around £250k per annum.
- 49.9 The Board noted the need to develop an appropriate exit strategy, which was currently lacking from the proposal. The issue of moral responsibility and ensuring an appropriate environment for minors was also discussed. It was reported that approximately 10% of the intake would be classed as minors. It was also noted that the University already had experience of dealing with minors in its own student populations and ventures such as summer schools.
- 49.10 Feedback from HEIs already working with Study Group indicated that it was a valuable initiative producing good quality students.
- 49.11 In summary, the Board broadly supported the proposal, but expressed some concerns, in particular with regard to securing a suitable exit strategy. It was agreed that negotiations with Study Group would continue and that a progress report would be presented to the Board in September 2008.

It was resolved that

The Board support the proposal in respect of the Kingston International Study Centre and await a progress report on the University's negotiations with Study Group, with particular attention to the development of an exit strategy

Action: *Progress report to Board of Governors in September 2008
(Pro Vice-Chancellor, External Relations)*

50.0 Approval of Finance Committee Effectiveness Review recommendations and revised Terms of Reference (Paper BG 70/08)

- 50.1 The Chair of the Finance Committee reported that the effectiveness review found that both the Board and the Committee felt that the Finance Committee was operating effectively. Some revisions had been made to the

Terms of Reference based on minor inconsistencies and partly relating to the Estates Committee review. The dates of some meetings had been re-scheduled to a more appropriate order in the calendar. It was noted that the work of the Finance Committee was largely driven by the annual timetable and regular sequence of the University's financial processes.

50.2 The Committee had discussed the issue of KPIs and benchmarking against the sector. It was noted that, although other committees had agreed to develop detailed KPIs, to a large extent the Finance Committee already received these in the Financial Plan and regular financial reporting. However, when these were next reviewed the Committee would consider whether additional data might be appropriate.

50.3 The Committee had suggested that when the Board next undertook a full review of its effectiveness it should look at the issue of how its sub committees added value to the performance of the University.

It was resolved that

The Board approve the recommendations as outlined in the report and the revised Terms of Reference of the Finance Committee

51.0 Approval of the appointment of the Student Nominee Member to the Board (Paper BG 71/08)

51.1 The Board congratulated Olrick Coker on his re-election as President of KUSU and noted his further appointment as the Student Nominee Member of the Board of Governors.

It was resolved that

The Board approve the appointment of Olrick Coker as the Student Nominee Member of the Board with effect from 15 August 2008 to 14 August 2009

52.0 Vice-Chancellor's Report (Paper BG 72/08)

52.1 National Developments

Discussions with the Secretary of State for DIUS:

52.1.1 The Vice-Chancellor reported on the main issues raised during a recently held dinner with John Denham the Secretary of State for DIUS (the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills).

52.1.2 The Secretary of State was concerned about negative press reports concerning the quality of higher education in the UK and anxious to prevent further poor publicity. This was as a result of a widely reported remark made by the Chief Executive of the Quality Assurance Agency, and also following

negative press reports about the excessive awarding of 1st and 2-1 degrees and pressurising external examiners.

52.1.3 The question of funding was also discussed. It was pointed out that higher education had enjoyed significant additional funding over the past seven years and that this was unlikely to be sustained for the next seven year period. The likelihood of an early increase of the fees cap was underplayed. It was noted that the Dearing Report had recommended a further report in ten years' time, which meant that a review of tuition fees was due in the near future.

52.1.4 There was also a discussion on pay, where it was noted that the next national increase in October was likely to be 4.2% rather than the expected 2.5%, which was a source of major concern for some other HEIs.

HEFCE

52.1.5 It was reported that the Chief Executive of HEFCE was resigning from his post and taking up the Vice-Chancellorship of the University of Birmingham next spring. It would be difficult for the Chief Executive to continue to be fully operational until that time because of the inevitable conflict of interests. It was therefore likely that he would stand down early and the Deputy Chief Executive would take over in the interim period before a replacement was appointed.

52.1.6 The significance of this would be that, as the focus of the DIUS was centred on higher education, it was likely that the role of HEFCE would be subject to a greater level of scrutiny and might decrease over time.

52.1.7 It was agreed that, bearing in mind the situation and possible changes in HEFCE, it was important that the University should consider possible ways of increasing its independence, in terms of funding.

52.2 University of London

52.2.1 The University's discussions regarding a possible application to join UoL would appear to be more long-term than originally thought. It seemed that there was little enthusiasm on the part of existing members to admit new members in the immediate future, and it was unlikely that there would be any further development for at least a year. It was clear that the University would need to satisfy three conditions to merit making an application. Firstly, the Kingston and Royal Holloway proposal in respect of SGUL would need to be successful, thus strengthening Kingston's potential links with UoL; secondly, Kingston would need to improve its RAE performance; and thirdly, it was essential to avoid any further issues leading to poor publicity, which inevitably had a negative impact on how the University was perceived.

52.3 Strategic Plan

52.3.1 It had been agreed that the final draft should be postponed until after the outcome of the SGUL Options Review later in the year, due to the

significant impact this would have on the University's ongoing strategy. However, it was important that the Strategic Plan was not dominated by the outcome of the SGUL review and work on the Strategic Plan was continuing, including more systematic development of scenario planning. It was now intended that the final draft of the Strategic Plan would be presented to the Board of Governors for its approval at the Away Day meeting in December.

52.4 HEFCE Audit and Student Targets

52.4.1 It was reported that following a routine audit of student numbers by HEFCE, a higher level of non-completion had been uncovered than had been reported. The final figure was 8.5% instead of the 7.5% which had been reported, and whilst this appeared to be a small percentage difference, it equated to a significant number of students, totalling approximately 500.

52.4.2 The implication of this was that the University's student numbers might be outside of its contract range, which could lead to a claw back in funding. It was anticipated that the worst case scenario would be a figure of £500k. However, it could also impact on target numbers, future bids for ASNs and the University's perception in terms of successful recruitment.

52.4.3 It was therefore important to address this issue and review the recording of non-completion. It was acknowledged that measuring non-completion was a complex matter, particularly in a university such as Kingston.

52.5 League Tables

52.5.1 It was reported that the University had performed well in the 'People and Planet Green league table' ranking of HE institutions. This league table was based on various 'green' indicators including environmental policies, recycling, carbon emissions and Fairtrade status. This was an important result because the issue of sustainability was becoming increasingly high-profile, and more significantly, because it had become a major theme at the University. A further benefit was the financial gain of appropriate energy use.

52.5.2 The University's position in *The Times Good University Guide* had slipped 13 places since last year, to 93rd ranking. This was mainly as a result of the impact of the National Student Survey and also due to lower staff : student ratios.

52.5.3 It was noted that, whilst it was accepted that league tables were unofficial listings created by the press, they were nevertheless influential as a measure of external reputation and it was therefore important that this issue was addressed. The Pro Vice-Chancellor, External Relations was leading an investigation into this matter, which would include reviewing methodologies, checking the accuracy of University reporting and analysing the changes instigated by HEIs with a record of improvement. It was anticipated that this work would be completed by the end of the summer and a report would subsequently be presented to the Board.

52.5.4 The Board discussed the possibility of adopting an alternative approach, involving a sector-owned league table working to a different set of benchmarks. However, it was noted that HEIs were not historically successful at collaborating on such issues. The Pro Vice-Chancellor, External Relations, would include consideration of this type of approach in his investigation and report.

52.6 National Student Survey

53.6.1 It was reported that HEFCE had found no fault with the University's central approach to the NSS, following its investigation into alleged bullying of psychology students. However, HEFCE had decided that the NSS scores for psychology would not be published next year, on the grounds that it could not guarantee the accuracy of the data in the responses.

52.7 External Examiners

52.7.1 Following allegations that an external examiner in the School of Music had been pressurised into changing her report, which had received wide press coverage, the Vice-Chancellor had decided that an external investigation should be commissioned, to include a review of current practices relating to external examiner reports. This was currently being carried out by the Secretary and Registrar at Goldsmiths and a report would be submitted once the review had been completed later in the summer.

52.8 Other matters to report

52.8.1 It was reported that the University was successful in securing a National Teaching Fellowship project award of £200k, having achieved 4th place out of 54 submissions.

52.8.2 Professor Robin Middlehurst had been jointly commissioned by Universities UK to undergo a research project on national and institutional approaches in Europe on attracting international students.

52.8.3 Neil Latham, Pro Vice-Chancellor for Employer Engagement was congratulated on his award of the CBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours List.

52.8.4 The Vice-Chancellor informed the Board of a long-running case with a former employee, which was now the subject of an Employment Tribunal.

Actions: *Final draft of the Strategic Plan to be presented to the Board for its approval at the Away Day meeting in December (Vice-Chancellor)*

Report to the Board on the outcome of a review on the University's position in the League Tables (Pro Vice-Chancellor, External Relations)

Stephen Cox left the meeting

53.0 Report on the Draft Financial Forecast

(Paper BG 73/08)

53.1 The Finance Director stated that, due to uncertainties relating to forthcoming capital expenditure and the pay deal in October, the final financial forecast would be delayed until the autumn. Meanwhile, a shorter version was being submitted at today's meeting, mainly for the purpose of approving the budget for 2008/09. The draft forecast had been considered in detail by the Finance Committee at its meeting on 3 July. A final forecast including a full commentary would be presented to the Board of Governors for approval at its meeting in November.

53.2 The Board noted the draft financial forecast and approved, in principle, the 2008/09 budget on the recommendation of the Finance Committee.

Action *Final financial forecast to be presented to the Board of Governors for approval in November 2008 (Finance Director)*

54.0 Diversity and Equality Report

(Paper BG 74/08)

54.1 The Diversity and Equality Report covered the two years 2005/06 and 2006/07 and included recommendations as well as a substantial amount of data. Further work would be carried out on analysis of the data in order to produce an appropriate action plan. Work had started on impact assessment, including the review of all University policies to ascertain their impact on different groups of people.

54.2 There had been some delay in finalising the Report mainly as a result of staff changes in the Diversity Unit. However, the intention was for future reports to be produced on an annual basis.

54.3 Significant issues would be discussed in detail by the Employment and Diversity Committee prior to being presented to the Board.

Peter Kopelman left the meeting

55.0 St George's University of London Strategic Options Review

(Paper BG 75/08 enclosed)

55.1 The Vice-Chancellor reported on developments in response to the SGUL Strategic Options Review. Following discussions with Royal Holloway, a joint bid had been submitted, which proposed the continuation of SGUL as an independently managed institution in South West London. This would be in the form of a company limited by guarantee, with the two share-holders being Royal Holloway and Kingston.

- 55.2 The proposal appeared to have been well received academically but the University still needed to undertake detailed work on the proposed governance structure and how it would affect the relationship of SGUL with the University of London.
- 55.3 Further meetings would be held with Royal Holloway and SGUL to clarify and further refine the proposal before the SGUL Council made a formal decision on its preferred bidder at its meeting on 30 September.
- 55.4 The Vice-Chancellor acknowledged that, as well as the matters highlighted in the paper, there would be significant issues to consider in relation to pensions and operational matters, if the joint bid was selected.
- 55.5 The Board expressed concern that the joint Faculty of Health and Social Care Sciences, which accounted for over half of the students at SGUL, had appeared to be excluded from the decision making process and asked that the Vice-Chancellor raise this with his counterpart at SGUL. Should it be necessary, the Chair would also raise the matter with his counterpart at SGUL.
- 55.6 The Board endorsed the work to date on the joint bid and expressed its support for the proposal. It was agreed that if any decision was needed before the next Board meeting, this would be done by correspondence.

Action *The Vice-Chancellor to contact his counterpart at SGUL about representation for the joint Faculty of Health and Social Care Sciences in the SGUL decision making process.*

56.0* Report on Health and Safety Update and Metrics
(Paper BG 76/08)

- 56.1 The Board noted the Report on Health and Safety Metrics.

57.0* Finance Report for May 2008
(Paper BG 44/08)

- 57.1 The Board noted the Finance Report for March 2008.

58.0* Academic Board Minutes of the meeting held on 5 March 2008

- 58.1 The Board noted the Academic Board Minutes.

59.0* Minutes of the Employment and Diversity Committee meeting held on 11 June 2008

- 59.1 The Board noted the Minutes of the Employment and Diversity Committee meeting.

60.0* Minutes of the Estates Committee meeting held on 25 June 2008

60.1 The Board noted the Minutes of the Estates Committee meeting.

61.0* Draft Minutes of the Finance Committee meeting held on 3 July 2008

61.1 The Board noted the draft Minutes of the Finance Committee meeting.

62.0 Any other business

62.1 There was no other business.

63.0 Date of next meeting

The next meeting of the Board of Governors was scheduled for Wednesday 24 September 2008 in the Town House at Penrhyn Road.

There being no further business, the meeting ended at 11.20am.

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