

BOARD OF GOVERNORS
Minutes of Meeting held 29 September 2021 at 12.00
Room 201, Locksbrook campus

Present:

Mr J Glasspool (Chair)	Ms J Luxford
Dr J Brasted	Ms V Nawathe
Ms E Casey*	Professor J Ravalier
Mr S Egan	Professor S Rigby (Vice-Chancellor)
Ms M Evans	Mr N Sturge
Ms T Fisk	Dr E Wakelin
Ms S Harris	Mr H Watts
Ms S Lane	
Mr S Lockren*	

In attendance:

Prof G Andrews (Vice-Provost) – for agenda items 12a&12b
Ms L Barling (Governance Manager)
Ms A Corbett (Student Activism Intern) – for agenda item 11
Mr P Fox (Pro Vice-Chancellor, Finance and Infrastructure)
Ms S Gallagher* (Deputy Head, Student Wellbeing Services) – for agenda item 14
Mr J Gulrajani (Head of Strategic Planning) – for agenda items 11 and 12a&b
Mr D Newman (University Secretary)
Professor N Sammells (Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Provost)
Ms J Smail (VP Education, Sabbatical Officer) – for agenda item 10

* attended virtually

21/01 WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed governors to the meeting, including Simon Lockren and Emily Casey who had joined the meeting virtually.
- 1.2 The Chair also specifically welcomed the new student governor, Harry Watts, to his first Board meeting and also Jermaine Ravalier, the new staff governor.
- 1.3 Lucy Barling was also introduced to the Board as the new BSU Governance Manager. Ms Barling would take the lead on governance operations for the Board and its committees and would be the primary point of contact for governors on most governance-related matters, going forward.

21/02 DECLARATION OF NEW INTERESTS

- 2.1 The Chair advised that no new governor interests had been declared in advance of the meeting.

21/03 PREVIOUS MINUTES

- 3.1 The Board **APPROVED** the minutes from the meeting on 30 July 2021 as a true and accurate record.

21/04 MATTERS ARISING

- 4.1 There were no matters arising and all of the outstanding actions on the action register had been closed, except for the development of key performance indicators, which was ongoing.
- 4.2 Governors were reminded that should they wish to provide any input into the types of KPIs that the Board could be reviewing in the future, and how best to measure those, then they should contact the Chair directly.

21/05 CHAIR'S BUSINESS

- 5.1 A number of updates were provided, and the following was **NOTED**:
 - 5.2 A second pensions' workshop was held with governors on 14 September 2021, and a final pensions report would be presented to the Board for its consideration and approval on 8 December 2021.
 - 5.3 The Chair thanked Teresa Fisk, on behalf of the Board, for her valuable input over many years on the Board, as she was due to retire at the end of November 2021.
 - 5.4 The University Secretary reported that the recruitment pack for four new governors was due to go live imminently. A series of interviews, led by the Chair of the Board would take place in December 2021.
 - 5.5 The University Secretary thanked Governors for their feedback on the candidate pack for the Chair recruitment pack and reported that the advertisement for the role would go live from January 2022, according to the timetable previously agreed by the Board.
 - 5.6 The new Board portal ('AdminControl') was to be rolled out on an incremental basis this term starting with the Remuneration Committee meeting on 13 October 2021.

21/06 REGISTER OF INTERESTS (Paper G1172)

- 6.1 The Board **NOTED** the annual update to the Register of Interests, including the 'fit and proper person' annual declarations.

21/07 REGISTER OF SEALS (Paper G1173)

- 7.1 The Board **NOTED** the annual update to the Register of Seals.

21/08 VICE-CHANCELLOR'S UPDATE (Paper G1174)

- 8.1 The Vice-Chancellor spoke to her report, and the Board **NOTED** the following key points:

External environment

- 8.1.1 The outcome of the Augar Review would be made public in October as part of the UK Government's Autumn Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR), including a period of consultation. It is understood that a flat cut to the amount of student loan was unlikely and instead the Government appeared more inclined to increase the amount that most graduates would have to pay back by changing the details of the student loan. In addition, the Government appeared very keen to work with the OfS in regulating the quality of courses by gradually reducing the availability of provision for courses that did not meet their quality standards. This would generate a great period of uncertainty for the sector **Redacted: FOI exemption, Section 43, commercial interests**
- 8.1.2 It was noted that the lifelong learning entitlement would continue, and the Government was taking the view to use 30 credit chunks which it was felt to be a positive move. However, it would mean that whatever the loan permitted, there would be a regulatory overburden compared with the current situation, which meant that the returns would be less. The OfS was about to launch a consultation on the types of qualitative data they would like to make use of and the key for BSU would be in terms of thresholds. BSU now had both the need and the opportunity to review its degrees through the lens of what those moderating numbers would likely look like in the future.

8.1.3 The Unison vote for a strike was unsuccessful but UCU were now voting on whether to strike and it was anticipated that this was likely to be successful nationally across the U.K. This would lead to an uneasy autumn for the sector.

COVID-19 update

8.1.4 BSU was taking a phased approach to returning to face-to-face study. Arts and other practical subjects had already returned almost entirely face-to-face. Whilst there remained some anxieties amongst staff, they were responding well to guidance and received regular communications.

Recruitment update

8.1.5 The Senior Executive team were working hard to put in place short-term measures to assist with improving recruitment for the 2022 cycle. In the autumn, the University would be making use of some external expertise to deliver a more measured long-term response.

8.2 During discussions, the following was highlighted:

8.2.1 The fall away from the number of applications to the number of actual enrolments still remained a significant risk to the University and that risk would continue to be monitored.

8.2.2 It was agreed that the ramping-up of the digital marketing agenda at the University was essential in order to address the previous over-reliance on getting prospective students to physically visit the University campus.

8.2.3 There was a diminishing pool of students coming to BSU from the local home market and in order to help improve that recruitment pipeline, the University had been working over the summer to increase its provision of Outreach Officers in local schools, and in particular to Bath College where there had previously been a gap.

8.2.4 Redacted: FOI exemption, Section 43: commercial interests

8.2.5 Feedback from students was that nationally they were now much more heavily focussed on job security and having a successful future career, and so governors were generally very supportive of the longer-term (more vocational) programme diversification approach that the University was taking in order to remain competitive. Governors did also emphasise, however, the importance of having a clarity of organisational identity, and clear messaging for students so that they understood what their future careers might look like if they were to choose to study a specific programme at BSU.

8.2.6 Governors agreed that partnerships and income diversification were a helpful way of bridging any financial-related gaps in the short-term, and noted that the University had also made some headway in developing some of the longer-term partnerships to ensure its future sustainability.

8.2.7 It was noted that governors would discuss in more detail the partnerships, portfolio and income diversification at a Board away morning in November as part of a post-pandemic Recovery and Renewal Plan 'refresher' session.

8.2.8 Redacted: FOI Exemption, section 43: commercial interests

Redacted: FOI exemption, section 43: commercial interests

- 8.2.9 In addition, the University had created a new Educational Partnerships Unit headed up by the Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor. This Unit was working with all external partners, undertaking due diligence prior to partnering, and monitoring and maintaining the relationships once established.
Redacted: FOI exemption, Section 43: commercial interests
- 8.2.10 Governors queried how successful the private providers were in delivering a strong student experience and were reassured to hear that GBS had scored very highly in NSS surveys and that the quality of academic course delivery was high. The BSU Students' Union (SU) had also recently recruited to a new post (Student Voice Coordinator (Partnerships)) enabled by specific additional BSU funding. While the initial focus was London, the SU was anticipating a more enhanced reach over time to other BSU students at different sites across the country.
- 8.2.11 Further, the University was looking to obtain Home Office approval for teaching sites in other areas of the country in order to improve market penetration and, as a result, BSU would be well positioned to achieve strong international student recruitment – this would not only have a positive financial impact but would also significantly improve student diversity and therefore student experience more broadly.
- 8.2.11 Governors agreed that there was a longer term strategic question about the balance of student numbers in Bath as opposed to more widely across the country, and what that might mean in terms of the type of University that BSU aspired to be. This was a conversation that the Board was keen to have at a future away day.

21/09 FINANCIAL OUTLOOK FOR 2021/22 AND BEYOND (Paper G1175)

- 9.1 The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Finance & Infrastructure) introduced his report.
- 9.2 During discussions, the following was highlighted:
- 9.2.1 Whilst this was an interim update pending enrolment, in the meantime the PVC F&I was also undertaking a more detailed review of the costs of core business, in order to get a stronger understanding of the underlying health of the University on a longer-term sustainable basis. In order to deliver on this piece of work, the University had recently recruited a new Director of Strategic Planning, Jo Stocks, who was project managing a more strategic review of finances across the University.
- 9.2.2 Feedback from potential purchasers, as well as staff and students, with regards to the sale of Green Park House had thus far been positive. The student governor emphasised the importance of students being in accommodation that was wholly owned by Bath Spa because students felt that they were being better looked after by their own University.
- [Jasmine Smail joined the meeting]*

21/10 SU SABBATICAL OFFICER PRIORITIES FOR 2021/22 (PowerPoint presentation)

- 10.1 The Chair welcomed Ms J Smail (VP Education, Sabbatical Officer) to the meeting.
- 10.2 Ms Smail and Ms Evans (SU President) spoke to their presentation, and the Board **NOTED** the Sabbatical Officers' key priorities for academic year 2021/22.
- 10.3 During discussions, the following was highlighted:
- 10.3.1 The Sabbatical Officers were keen to ensure that their objectives for the year translated easily across to those BSU students who were not located in Bath. However, it was clear that there was still some work to be done in this area. It was anticipated that the recently recruited role in the SU, as referenced above (see 8.2.10), would go some way to delivering a successful integration of all students across the wider University community.
- 10.3.2 Governors were very supportive of the idea of trying to remove any financial barriers for students and were pleased to hear that the Senior Executive team continued to work closely with the SU to support emerging initiatives.

- 10.3.3 In terms of student mental health and wellbeing, governors were made aware of the impact of drugs and alcohol abuse, and were pleased to hear that in recent years a wider range of fresher activities had been taking place that did not involve alcohol. The SU was also working in partnership with the wider community to raise awareness amongst BSU students of the harmful effects of alcohol and drugs. The Board was reminded that the Board Awareness session next week (5 October) was on the topic of student wellbeing and safeguarding.
- 10.3.4 The Sabbatical Officers were also working with individual schools looking at the decolonisation of the curriculum and how that could be applied practically and tangibly to existing and new curriculums at school level.

[Jasmine Smail left the meeting]

[Josh Gulrajani and Alicia Corbett joined the meeting]

21/11 REFLECTIONS ON THE EXPERIENCES OF STUDENTS IN PRIVATELY OWNED ACCOMMODATION (PBSA) (Paper G1176)

- 11.1 The Chair welcomed Mr J Gulrajani and Ms A Corbett to the meeting, and they introduced their paper.
- 11.2 The Board NOTED the following:
- 11.2.1 The work was undertaken by a student intern with the support of colleagues across the University. The aim of the work was to help improve understanding of the experience of students living in privately owned purpose-built student accommodation (PBSAs) while studying at Bath Spa University.
- 11.2.2 The paper highlighted a number of pieces of quantitative and qualitative research that had been undertaken throughout the summer 2021, enhancements and improvements taken to the operational running of student accommodation as a result of student feedback, and the key commitments being made by Bath Spa University in this space.
- 11.2.3 The submission of the paper to the Board of Governors marked the conclusion of the 2021 Activism Internship.
- 11.3 During discussions it was noted that the University would look forward to working collaboratively with the SU to recruit the next summer intern, including discussing the selection of the topic/key issues for the intern's project to focus on.
- 11.4 The Board **ENDORSED** the direction of travel, and encouraged the Senior Executive Team to continue work in this area.

[Alicia Corbett left the meeting]

[Georgina Andrews joined the meeting]

21/12 NATIONAL STUDENT SURVEY 2021: ANALYSIS AND ACTIONS (Paper G1177)

- 12.1 The Chair welcomed Professor G Andrews (Vice-Provost) to the meeting who was leading on this item in place of Dr R Schaaf (PVC Student Experience) who was unable to attend today's meeting.
- 12.2 Professor Andrews introduced the paper and the Board **NOTED** the following key points:
- 12.2.1 NSS results had been adversely impacted by the pandemic, but BSU was less severely impacted compared with the rest of the sector, so there had been a reduction in the gap between BSU results and the sector results overall.
- 12.2.2 The areas where the University had improved this year, despite the challenges arising from the global pandemic, were: assessment & feedback, organisation & management and the SU.
- 12.2.3 It was encouraging to see that the efforts BSU staff had made to give students as much access to the campus as was possible within the government regulations, which was clearly appreciated by the students. The University had worked collaboratively with the SU to deliver these opportunities.

- 12.2.4 The overarching message was that the students really valued a sense of community and it was difficult to engender that feeling of community solely online. One of the key targets for the University, therefore, was to work hard on re-energising and re-igniting that sense of community and making the most of the ability to have face-to-face campus facilities, supplemented by online activities where there was a good pedagogic reason for doing so.
- 12.2.5 The Board noted that the University was undertaking a more targeted approach to action planning this year – looking across the University in its entirety, initially at the NSS results, but then extending that to a broader range of KPIs and focussing efforts on particular key activities.
- 12.2.6 The Board also noted that the NSS results from the Global Banking School were 93% overall NSS satisfaction and the Senior Executive team were keen to learn lessons from them and adapt for BSU going forward.
- 12.3 During discussions the following was highlighted:
- 12.3.1 The University had received a low satisfaction rate for mental health and wellbeing, but it was broadly perceived to be a national issue for young people, exacerbated by the coronavirus pandemic. However, governors were pleased to hear that mental health and wellbeing was a key priority for the University, which was investing more into enhancing the support it provided to students in that area.
- 12.3.2 The biggest challenge, and also opportunity, was about how the University could bring strong leadership into those subjects that were struggling.

21/13 METRICS, STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS (PowerPoint presentation)

- 13.1 Professor G Andrews remained in the meeting to take the Board through her presentation on metrics. Mr J Gulrajani, was also present to assist.
- 13.2 The Board **NOTED** the correlation between the NSS data and other datasets such as drop-out rates and degree performance, as a way of providing some further insights beyond the perceptual insights of the NSS survey.

*[Georgina Andrews and Josh Gulrajani left the meeting]
[Sara Gallagher joined the meeting]*

21/14 PREVENT DUTY REPORT (Paper G1178)

- 14.1 The Chair welcomed Sara Gallagher to the meeting and invited her to talk to her report.
- 14.2 The Board **NOTED** that the OfS had only released the updated Prevent guidance yesterday and that the associated templates had still not be released, hence why the submission appended to the paper had been provided as a draft.
- 14.3 It was also **NOTED** that the updated guidance provided for the removal from this year's submission of the need for an accountability statement i.e. the narrative, and that it was focussing on a more detailed set of data. Governors were assured that there were no risks to the institution associated with the additional datasets and a revised institutional risk assessment would be submitted to the OfS alongside the formal return.
- 14.4 The Board **CONSIDERED** the draft submission. During discussions, the following was highlighted:
- 14.4.1 There was a live action plan for BSU London, which was included in the Prevent risk register and which formed part of the recent audit of student wellbeing services. All relevant BSU members of staff had undertaken safeguarding training, and the University was in the process of reviewing its safeguarding framework to ensure that it was applicable to its external partners. It was **AGREED** that the Audit Committee should continue to keep this under review to ensure the robustness of the coverage across the entire University, including through its partner provision.

- 14.4.2 Ms J Brasted, an independent governor with a background and experience in the OfS, would also review the final version of the Prevent return prior to its submission.
- 14.5 The Board **DELEGATED AUTHORITY** to the Chair of the Board to sign the Prevent annual accountability statement if/as required when the new template was available, to enable submission to the OfS within the deadline.

ACTION: HEAD OF STUDENT WELLBEING SERVICES / J BRASTED / CHAIR

[Sara Gallagher left the meeting]

21/15 ANNUAL BOARD AND COMMITTEE EFFECTIVENESS SURVEY RESULTS (Paper G1179)

15.1 David Newman introduced the report and Lucy Barling provided additional details.

15.2 The Board **CONSIDERED** the results and **ENDORSED** the action plan to be taken forward.

21/16 ANNUAL COMPLIANCE STATEMENT ON RESEARCH INTEGRITY (Paper G1180)

16.1 The Board **APPROVED** the annual compliance statement on research integrity.

21/17 FINANCE & INFRASTRUCTURE MEETING MINUTES (Paper G1181)

17.1 The Board **NOTED** the previous meeting minutes of the Finance & Infrastructure Committee.

21/18 PENSIONS REVIEW REFERENCE GROUP MEETING MINUTES (Paper G1182)

18.1 The Board **NOTED** the previous meeting minutes of the Pensions Review Reference Group.

21/19 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

19.1 The date of the next board meeting was confirmed as Wednesday 8 December 2021 (to be held on campus unless otherwise advised).

19.2 Board members were invited to provide feedback to the Governance Manager on today's meeting.

19.3 The Board awareness session (online) next Tuesday, 5 October, would include 2 presentations: Student Wellbeing (focus: supporting students through the pandemic); and Library Services (focus: digitised learning infrastructure).

[The meeting ended at 15:27]

Lucy Barling
29 September 2021

(Signed as a record of confirmed minutes)

Redacted: FOI exemption 40:Personal data

Jonathan Glasspool, Chair
Date: 8 December 2021