



## University Executive Board

### Minutes of the meeting of 7 March 2023

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**Present:** Professor Shearer West (Vice-Chancellor), Neil Crout (PVC RKE), Dr Paul Greatrix (Registrar), Professor Jeremy Gregory (FPVC Arts), David Hill (CDO), Jaspal Kaur (Director of Human Resources), Professor Sam Kingman (FPVC Engineering), Professor Todd Landman (FPVC Social Sciences), Professor Katherine Linehan (PVC EDI and People), Professor Sarah Metcalfe (Provost UNM) via Teams, Professor Nick Miles (Provost UNNC) via Teams, Professor Jane Norman (DVC), Professor Robert Mokaya (PVC GE), Professor Sarah Speight (PVC ESE) for minutes, Margaret Monckton (CFO), Professor Zoe Wilson (FPVC Science).

**Attending:** Rowena Hall (Secretary), Jason Phoenix (Programme Director CMC), Sally Blackmore (Financial Controller) for minute 23.30, Helen Pennack (Chief Marketing and Communications Officer) for minute 23.30, Pip Peakman (Director of Research and Innovation) for minute 23.30, Niall O'Loughlin (Director of RKE Excellence and Strategy) for minute 23.30, Tom Harvey (Head of Commercial) for minute 23.30, Angela McDonald (Head of Finance) for minute 23.30, Helen Dunn (Deputy Director of HR) for minute 23.30, Helen McNamara, (Director of Organisational & People Development) for minute 23.30, Gary Moss (Director of Estates and Facilities) for minute 23.31, Amanda Pettingill (Catering, Hospitality and Conferencing Director) for minute 23.31, Debbie Henthorn, (Associate Director of Operations F&I) for minute 23.31, Jason Carter (Director of Governance and Assurance) for minute 23.32 and 23.33. Kevin Thompson (Associate Director for Risk Management) for minute 23.34, Avril Lane (HR Project Officer) for minute 23.34, Helen McNamara (Director of Organisational and People Development) for minute 23.35.

**Apologies:** Professor Sir Jonathan Van-Tam (FPVC Medicine and Health Sciences)

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#### 23.26 Welcome, Apologies, Quoracy and Declarations of Interest

- .1 The Chair welcomed Jason Phoenix, Programme Director CMC to the meeting as an observer. The PVC ESE would need to leave the meeting at points to support the ongoing Ofsted monitoring visit.
- .2 The Secretary confirmed that the meeting was quorate and there were no declarations of interest.

#### 23.27 Minutes of 8 February 2023 and Action Log

- .1 The minutes of the meeting held on 8 February 2023 were confirmed as a true record.
- .2 The Action Tracker was NOTED.

#### 23.28 Chair's business

- .1 The Vice-Chancellor had circulated an update to UEB members prior to the meeting.
- .2 UEB discussed how to build on the University's reputation both locally and nationally. A targeted approach in the area of research excellence would be mostly likely to improve upon the University's current national profile.
- .3 It was reported that there was scope to strengthen research advocacy within External Relations. A promising hire had recently been made to the position of Head of Research Advocacy, but a vacancy remained.



- .4 It was AGREED that a session on research reputation would be scheduled for a forthcoming UEB Away Day.

	<b>ACTION</b>	<b>OWNER</b>	<b>DUE</b>
.5	To schedule a research reputation session on the UEB Away Day forward plan.	Secretary	31 March

**23.29 Medium Term Financial Plan**

- .1 UEB RECEIVED the paper (UEB/23/38) from the Chief Financial Officer and the Financial Controller. The paper set out analysis of the key inputs to the Medium Term Financial Plan (the MTFP).
- .2 UEB was reminded of the assumptions discussed at the last UEB meeting, which included changes to inflation assumptions to recognise the reality of higher inflation for a longer period, the continued delivery against borrowing and USS covenants, and the retention of £50m headroom. Debt facilities would be reviewed when appropriate.

**Size and Shape**

- .3 The Chief Marketing and Communications Officer confirmed that the context of the paper was based on the recent review of Size and Shape.
- .4 UEB was reminded that some student recruitment targets had been missed for a number of years. A full diagnosis of the issues had been completed. Causes of failure to meet current targets included amongst others a reduction in 2+2 numbers, Kaplan not meeting its recruitment targets, less competitive agent commission rates and a lack of enthusiasm in some Schools for the recruitment of international students.
- .5 Targets for the next admission cycle were more likely to be met as a result of a number of targeted activities which included an increase to agent commission, the implementation of the Digital Engagement programme, a firm commitment from Kaplan to meet targets, and the outcomes of a review of scholarships.
- .6 The DVC expressed the view, that in financial terms, achieving international student recruitment targets should be the top priority. The University’s position and reputation indicated that it should be performing better in this area.
- .7 The proposed targets for student recruitment were reported to be realistic and achievable. The DVC considered the proposed targets to be conservative and strongly advocated for more ambitious targets over the next three to five years.
- .8 The leadership of FPVCs would be vital to ensuring that Heads of School understood the importance of international student recruitment and focussed appropriately on achieving targets.
- .9 UEB NOTED and AGREED the proposed actions required to ensure that future Size and Shape targets were met and further AGREED the 2023/24 student recruitment targets.

**Research Financial Performance.**

- .10 The Director of RKE Excellence and Strategy confirmed that the original MTFP targets for research income were achievable, but it would take three years longer than originally anticipated. Research income had recovered faster than predicted following Covid, but its profile had since reverted to its pre-Covid trend. The improved performance of the Schools of Life Sciences, Biosciences and Medicine would shorten the time required to achieve targets significantly.
- .11 The PVC RKE outlined ongoing activity as part of the Research Strategic Delivery Plan designed to improve the quality of research. It was NOTED that work to justify the original MTFP targets had already been carried out, but it remained unclear why targets were unable to be delivered.



- .12 The Director of Research and Innovation provided details of the activity ongoing within the Facilities of MHS and Science to deliver improvements. The challenges experienced in connection with clinical research were highlighted and included the support offered by the NHS Trust. The separate approaches of, and the culture within, the relevant Schools was also referenced.
- .13 As with achieving international student recruitment targets, the leadership of FPVCs was key to achieving research income targets. A culture of writing grants and successfully bringing awards into Schools needed to be fostered and owned by Heads of School.
- .14 Work was required to ensure that the research income per FTE KPI linked back to the MTFP and joined up with Faculty Plans. This would support the delivery and understanding where targets were not met.
- .15 UEB AGREED 2023/24 research income targets as outlined in the paper and the assumption of research margin recovery of 25%.

### Commercial Income

- .16 Performance in 2022/23 had been challenging as a result of a number of factors (i) hall occupancy issues and fixed pricing for the current and next year which could not take account of inflation (ii) reduced footfall in catering outlets and the full costs of inflation not being passed on to customers (iii) not being able to realise the full benefits of Nottingham Venues for some time.
- .17 It was NOTED that commercial income and margin targets might have to be reduced in the MTFP.

### Faculty Resource Review

- .18 UEB NOTED the initial analysis of the Faculty Resource Review and the proposed next steps in the development and deployment of a new funding model which were included as part of the paper.
- .19 Further work was suggested to understand staff ratios within Schools including APM to R&T and student to APM and R&T and what optimal ratios might look like, as well as work to understand the different provisions that might be made for international and home students.
- .20 The new Faculty funding model would require a further 12 months' development and therefore would not impact on the 2023/2024 MTFP.

### Next Steps

- .21 The first draft of the MTFP would be submitted to the next meeting of UEB for discussion.

### 23.30 People and Culture Strategic Delivery Plan

- .1 UEB RECEIVED the paper (UEB/23/40) presented by the Director of Human Resources, Deputy Director Human Resources and Director of Organisational and People Development.
- .2 UEB NOTED that the proposed People and Culture Strategic Delivery Plan (the Plan) would replace the separate People, and EDI Strategic Delivery Plans. The Plan would be integral, alongside the HR Transformation Business Case, to the successful transformation of Human Resources.
- .3 The Plan contained 23 themes of which the detail and approach of the Policy Development theme was outlined by the Deputy Director of Human Resources. A dedicated and specialist resource would be established to deliver a rationalised suite of high-level policies aligned to University strategy and values conforming with the standards of the University's Policy Framework. The policies would be benchmarked externally and reflect best practice and be accompanied by guidance and relevant training programmes. Policy delivery would be supported by revised HR processes and would provide a foundation on which to build and develop activity designed to support culture change at the University.



- .4 The 23 themes and their programmes of work would be supported by the establishment of a PMO resourced by PPSC to deliver the change programmes.
- .5 It was not possible to split the HR function into a change team and business as usual team, consequently it would be important to manage expectations as to delivery across the University. It was suggested that ensuring that clear communication of the internal structures of HR including organigrams would be helpful.
- .6 It was acknowledged that change in structure within HR following the HR review, which had seen the introduction of the three senior director roles, had already demonstrated a positive impact.
- .7 UEB APPROVED the People and Culture Strategic Delivery Plan and NOTED that the HR Transformation Business Case would be considered by Planning and Resources Committee at its next meeting.

	<b>ACTION</b>	<b>OWNER</b>	<b>DUE</b>
.8	To ensure dissemination of the internal structure of HR including organigrams	Director of Human Resources	Ongoing

**23.31 Project Stay Strategic Review**

- .1 UEB RECEIVED the paper (UEB/23/41) presented by the FPVC Engineering and Director of Estates and Facilities.
- .2 UEB was reminded that it had received a presentation on the initial findings of the strategic review of Project Stay at the UEB Away Day in January. The paper set out a summary of the review and proposed a Residential Strategy which had been refined and finalised by the Project Stay Task and Finish Group and incorporated the feedback received during the Away Day.
- .3 The four pillars of the Residential Strategy were NOTED as (i) Student Experience, (ii) Enabling Change and the Role of the University, (iii) Best Fit/Best Value Property Solution, and (iv) Ensuring Performance. The proposed workstreams and indicated timelines to deliver the Residential Strategy were also NOTED.
- .4 It was suggested that the Student Experience pillar should be expanded further to ensure that it referenced the full spectrum of student experience elements including welcome and arrival, induction, residential support, welfare and wellbeing.
- .5 Subject to the further refinement of the Student Experience pillar, the Residential Strategy was APPROVED.

	<b>ACTION</b>	<b>OWNER</b>	<b>DUE</b>
.6	To refine the Student Experience pillar as suggested by UEB	Director of Estates and Facilities	15 April 2023
.7	To deliver regular updates to UEB on the implementation on the Residential Strategy.	Project Sponsors: FPVC Engineering, FPVC Social Sciences.	Annually

**23.32 Embedding Performance Monitoring into the University Committee Structure**

- .1 UEB RECEIVED the paper (UEB/23/37) from the Director of Governance and Assurance which proposed several phases of activity to clarify the roles and responsibilities of committees at the University and to standardise ways of working.
- .2 UEB was keen that committees were streamlined as far as possible, and that their membership was appropriate to discharge their purpose. Effective operation was vital to ensure that operational matters were managed at an appropriate level.



- .3 There was some discussion on whether it would be possible to identify KPIs for the Civic and Regional Committee and the Global Engagement Committee.
- .4 The planned review of business case approvals was welcomed. The importance of ensuring that business cases, even at their earliest of stages, contained explicit and quantitative assessment of how risk and KPIs were affected was highlighted.
- .5 UEB NOTED the proposed phases of activity and AGREED the principle that committees with a reporting line to UEB had responsibility not just for the development and implementation of strategy, but also monitoring the performance of those strategies and reporting to Planning and Resources Committee.

### 23.33 Strategic Risk Management Update

- .1 UEB RECEIVED the paper (UEB/23/43) from the Director of Governance and Assurance which included the Strategic Risk Register.
- .2 UEB NOTED the progress of the Strategic Risk Register over the last 18 months and most recently, the significant work that had been undertaken with Planning and Resources Committee. During the recent workshop, members of PRC reviewed the risks with a view to identifying (i) gaps in details, including any missing risks, (ii) refining existing risks to ensure narrative and scores are reflective of key concerns and (iii) de-escalating risks for management and oversight at sub-committee level.
- .3 Work would be undertaken with UEB sub-committee chairs over the next year to support sub-committees to understand and carry-out their risk responsibilities to ensure risk management oversight, resolution and escalation / de-escalation processes were embedded at committee level and support chairs to understand their responsibilities to drive effective risk management practice.
- .4 UEB considered the Strategic Risk Register and suggested a number of amendments and additions before the document was shared with Council at its next meeting:
  - .1 it was suggested that the risk relating to support for disabled staff, which had been removed following discussion at the PRC risk workshop, should be reinstated. However, it was acknowledged that some members considered that the risk did not have the same potentially wide-ranging impact on the University as the other risks on the strategic risk register and it would be better managed at sub-committee level.
  - .2 the student experience and post-graduate taught risk were not sufficiently distinct and should be merged.
  - .3 further consideration should be given to whether there was a gap relating to the condition of the University's estate, and whether this needed to be articulated as a risk within the Strategic Risk Register.
  - .4 a number of the mitigating actions lacked specificity in terms of identified owner and timescales for completion. UEB risk owners were asked to review actions pertaining to their risks and ensure sufficient detail was provided.
- .5 It was considered that Council would have a continued interest in risks connected with University's overseas campuses, therefore a programme of work led by the Director of Governance and Assurance was scheduled to take place with both Provosts and management at UNNC and UNM.
- .6 It was confirmed that addressing league table position was not a risk in itself but formed part of the mitigations required to address the international student recruitment risk. Actions to address league table position was being monitored through the League Tables Group and the Reputation and Recruitment Committee.
- .7 There was a request from UEB for a mechanism to be determined to ensure that Members had awareness of the risks being managed at sub-committee level.



- .8 It was NOTED that an exploration of risk appetite across Strategic Plan themes would take place at a forthcoming UEB Away Day.
- .9 UEB APPROVED the Strategic Risk Register subject to comments made in the meeting and further review and engagement from risk owners.

	<b>ACTION</b>	<b>OWNER</b>	<b>DUE</b>
.10	To confirm whether there was appropriate UNNC and UNM involvement in the League Tables Group and Reputation and Recruitment Committee.	Registrar	15 April
.11	To review actions pertaining to risks on the Strategic Risk Register and ensure sufficient detail was provided.	Strategic Risk Register owners	15 April

**23.34 Gender/Ethnicity Pay Gap Data**

- .1 UEB RECEIVED the paper (UEB/23/39) from the PVC EDI and People and the Director of Human Resources which set out the University’s gender and ethnicity pay gap data for the year 2021/22.
- .2 UEB NOTED the mean gap for gender pay remained the same and the median gap had decreased. It was NOTED that both the mean and median gap for ethnicity pay had increased.
- .3 The contributing factors to both the gender pay gap and the increase in the ethnicity pay gap were NOTED.
- .4 A number of planned actions to reduce the pay gaps were outlined and included the establishment of a pay and reward team within Human Resources, the People and Culture Strategy, and the collation of data from exit interviews. There were also opportunities to support the reduction in pay gaps through addressing aspects of the Nottingham Reward Scheme.
- .5 It would be a priority to ensure the data for the period 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023 was made available as soon as possible, so that the impacts of the professorial banding exercise and the APM 1-3 staff review could be seen.
- .6 It was hoped that following the implementation of Digital Core, a real time dashboard of relevant data could be created. There was also an aspiration to provide similar reporting for disability pay.

**23.35 Improvement and Insight Group – Next Steps**

- .1 UEB RECEIVED the paper (UEB/23/44) from the Director of Organisation and People Development.
- .2 UEB was reminded that it had previously agreed the exploration and development of options to create a group which would engage diversity of thought and experience into UEB discussions. The paper set out a proposed plan to establish an Improvement and Insight Group (the Group)
- .3 There would be a phased approach to the creation and introduction of the Group, with the first phase between March and September focused on engagement with equality networks and groups, and the second phase from September onwards which would include an application process run alongside the LMA applications and the VC mentoring scheme.
- .4 A number of suggestions were made for further consideration:
  - .1 A solid understanding of the operation of the HE sector would need to be established across members of the Group.



- .2 Each topic considered by the Group would need to be accompanied by an appropriate briefing on the operational constraints within the subject area.
- .3 The purpose and informality of the Group would need to be maintained. The intent was not to create a group to which UEB would need to report back or update on the implementation or not of its suggestions.
- .4 The application process should remain light touch to maximise the opportunity of creating a diverse Group membership. It would be vital to try to ensure a balance between a membership that felt able to make suggestions that challenged the typical or expected approach but did not feel that it was required or empowered to direct the approach of UEB.
- .5 The option of rotational membership was suggested.
- .6 The question of how the success of the Group might be measured was raised.
- .5 The Provost UNNC was keen to see how the establishment of the Group progressed and to implement a similar approach at UNNC.
- .6 The Vice-Chancellor reminded UEB that this was a pilot project and provided options to experiment with different approaches.

#### **23.36 Roundtable**

- .1 The UK Institute of Technical Skills and Strategy funded by Research England and of Research and Innovation would be launched the next day. The Institute would be hosted by the University in partnership with a network of organisations and institutions across UK higher education and research.
- .2 There had been a major water leak in the School of Life Sciences which had affected a number of laboratories.

#### **23.37 Any Other Business**

- .1 The Programme Director of CMC made a number of observations about his attendance at the meeting (i) Members had read all the material prior to the meeting which supported immediate discussion of the salient issues, made presentation of papers unnecessary and avoided the need for PowerPoint presentations (ii) the attention of all Members was present in the room (iii) there was broad discussion and strong debate of the items on the agenda.
- .2 The Vice-Chancellor NOTED that it was the last UEB meeting for Professor Crout before his retirement and extended her thanks on behalf of UEB for his work and support during his time as interim PVC RKE. Thanks were also given to Professor Gregory and Kingman for the interim roles they had undertaken before Professor Norman commenced her role as Deputy Vice-Chancellor.