University Executive Board

Minutes of the meeting of 11 May 2023

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 Katherine Linehan (PVC EDI and People), Professor Sarah Metcalfe (Provost UNM), Professor Nick Miles (Provost UNNC), Professor Jane Norman (DVC) via Teams from minute 23.55, Professor Robert Mokaya (PVC GE), Professor Sarah Speight (PVC ESE) for minutes, Margaret Monckton (CFO), Professor Zoe Wilson (FPVC Science).
Attending:	Rowena Hall (Secretary), Kenon Man (Deputy Director of Marketing) from minute 23.50, Andri Georgiadou (Associate Professor, NUBS) from minute 23.49, Sally Blackamore (Financial Controller) for minutes 23.52 to 23.54, Helen Lawrenson (Director of Financial Management) for minute 23.52 and 23.53, Mark Barber (PA Consulting) for minute 23.54, Rosalie Parkin (Head of Procurement) for minute 23.54, Carolyn Stanhope (Director of HR Digital Systems and Services) for minute 23.54, Robert Philips (Project Manager) for minute 23.54, Jenny Vempati (Director of Internal Audit) for minute 23.55 and Katy Edwards (Associate Director of Portfolio Management) for minute 23.56.
Apologies:	Professor Todd Landman (FPVC Social Sciences),

23.49 Welcome, Apologies, Quoracy and Declarations of Interest

.1 The Chair welcomed Kenon Man (Deputy Director of Marketing) and Andri Georgiadou, (Associate Professor, NUBS) to the meeting as observers.

.2 The Secretary confirmed that the meeting was quorate and there were no declarations of interest.

23.50 Minutes of 4 April 2023 and Action Log

.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 4 April 2023 were confirmed as a true record.

.2 The Action Tracker including two overdue actions was NOTED.

Post meeting note: As the request of Professor Metcalfe, the following change has been made: Minute 23.36.1 - The Malaysian Qualifications Agency has confirmed UNM's **self-accrediting** status until 2027.

23.51 Chair's business

.1 The Vice-Chancellor had circulated an update to UEB members prior to the meeting.

.2 Congratulations were offered by the Vice-Chancellor and members of UEB to Professor Robert Mokaya who had been elected a Fellow of the Royal Society.

.3 Members were apprised on the outcome of a Special Meeting of Senate held earlier in the day.

.4   Members NOTED that the Vice-Chancellor would be appointed the next Chair of the
       Universitas 21 Network. It was AGREED to include a future item on a UEB agenda to
       consider the University's priorities in connection with its membership.

	ACTION	OWNER	DUE
.5	To schedule an item to consider the University's priorities in connection with its membership of U21.	Secretary	6 June 2023

23.52   Finance Update

.1   UEB RECEIVED the paper (UEB/23/65) from the Chief Financial Officer which summarised
       the University's financial performance for the year to date.

.2   UEB NOTED a slight improvement in the forecasted surplus for 2022/23. Two keys areas
       which impacted the surplus were underspend on some capital projects and in some faculties,
       and higher than forecasted research awards performance.

.3   Faculties were being supported by the financial management teams to deliver their spending
       plans.

.4   The additional reporting on finance KPIs, spend monitoring and debts level was welcomed.

.5   There was some discussion about how research successes might be highlighted and
       celebrated.

23.53   Medium Term Financial Plan – Strategic Investments

.1   UEB RECEIVED the paper (UEB/23/60) from the Chief Financial Officer. The paper provided
       details of the demand on the funding available as set out in the Medium Term Financial Plan
       (MTFP) for strategic revenue and capital investment and proposed an allocation of funds
       across the various strategic themes.

.2   UEB NOTED that as a result of income targets not being met, the full investment pipeline
       could not be funded. The paper set out a proposed prioritisation for projects and indicated
       those projects that could not be funded. The paper would be reviewed when the MTFP was
       finalised and LRF3 completed. Any additional surplus would be used to help relieve pressure
       on the investment pipeline where possible; however some unfunded projects would remain.

.3   To support Digital Strategy Committee and Estates and Infrastructure Committee to plan
       spending across multiple years, it had been proposed that the funding allocated in the MTFP
       2022 remain in place and the committees be permitted to prioritise within those envelopes.
       This would include prioritising any in-flight projects and essential maintenance spend. A full
       prioritisation review had been undertaken by both committees, the results of which were set
       out in the paper.

.4   The Director of Financial Management confirmed that detailed work on the costing and
       phasing of the Castle Meadow campus projects, Next Generation programme, and the
       Curriculum and E-Assessment programmes continued. There was an option to reallocate
       funding to the Castle Meadow projects from the Estates pipeline, but this would result in a
       reduction of Estates funded projects.

.5   UEB was reminded that the strategic funding envelope for 2023/24 was £142m. There would
       be capacity challenges around delivering such a large strategic investment spend.

.6   It was NOTED that the prioritisation lists for Digital, Estates, Research and other areas had
       been reviewed in isolation. It was suggested that following the same approach that was used
       in the previous year, a small group of UEB members should convene to consider the overall

prioritisation of the strategic investments. This would ensure that the prioritisation of projects would address the University's strategy and KPIs, and that there was the correct balance between maintenance and innovation projects linked to KPIs.

.7   It was AGREED that the sub-group be convened and should consist of, in the first instance, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Chief Financial Officer and Professor Kingman. Additional members should be added to the sub-group as determined by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor.

.8   It was further AGREED that the final business and prioritisation plans should be submitted to UEB in June following consideration by the sub-group.

.9   The Vice-Chancellor concluded the discussion by emphasising the importance of the University achieving its income targets. Improvements were being seen in research income, but international student recruitment remained a challenge. It was hoped that the PhD Scholarships project and the continued roll out of the Digital Engagement programme would assist here.

	ACTION	OWNER	DUE
.10	To convene the UEB sub-group to review the prioritisation of strategic investment funding.	Deputy Vice-Chancellor	22 May 2023
.11	Submit the final prioritisation plans to UEB in June	Chief Financial Officer	6 June 2023

23.54   Digital Core – Maximising the Benefits

.1   UEB RECEIVED the paper (UEB/23/62) sponsored by the Chief Financial Officer which provided an update on the project's progress.

.2   The Digital Core project had reached a point where the practical impacts of implementing the new Finance, HR and Procurement system were understood and key potential challenges had been identified. Project leads were keen to understand UEB's appetite and support for the proposed approach to managing those challenges.

.3   The system was based around workflows which would drive requests and approvals for HR, Finance and Procurement processes. It had been ascertained that in some cases the physical organisational structures of the University resulted in extremely high requestor to approver ratios – 100:1 and 64:1.

.4   It was NOTED there would not be an organisational redesign at the University to facilitate the deployment of the system. UEB considered that there should be sufficient time before its launch in February 2024 for the project to work with Schools and Faculties to ensure that no approver would be responsible for approving the requests of any more than around 10 requestors.

.5   UEB considered the importance of the detailed management information that the system was capable of delivering and NOTED that the effectiveness of this information would be limited without high uptake and adoption by users. It was highlighted that whilst there were policies in place to require the taking and recording of annual leave and sickness absence, in certain areas of the University compliance with those policies were low.

.6   UEB advised that a carefully devised engagement plan would be required and should be deployed in the lead up to the project launch to ensure that uptake and adoption was at sufficient levels. This would need to include transparency about how the information recorded would be used and provide information on access and security.

.7   It was NOTED that the system would provide an opportunity to improve the processes for making decisions about the balance of the workforce and would streamline the recruitment approval steps significantly. It had been proposed that no approval would be required to replace existing posts, and for new posts, the approval of an identified operational approver

would be required. The level or role of the approver could be the same across the University or vary from department to department.

.8 There was a view amongst Members that whether and how to replace a post was not always a straightforward matter and that further consideration should be given to the proposal that the replacement of existing posts did not require approval. UEB requested the project to provide example modelling of the approvals process.

.9 UEB was supportive that the system would facilitate inclusive recruitment, enabling anonymous shortlisting and would continue to allow the use of a CV route where required.

.10 The strong correlation between post-go live problems and poor uptake of training that had been associated with similar projects at other institutions was NOTED.   A number of suggestions for reducing the potential for go-live problems were made and included: making it a requirement that mandatory training be completed before access to the system was granted, ensuring that training was bite-sized and predominantly available via short videos rather than delivered classroom style, the availability of rapid response teams and floor walkers and monitoring and reporting of the uptake of training.

.11 UEB was thanked for its contribution to the discussion.

	ACTION	OWNER	DUE
.12	To share with UEB the draft engagement plan for the launch of the system	Chief Financial Officer	5 June
.13	To provide the modelling for the approvals framework for recruitment decisions.	Director of HR	

23.55 Internal Audit Six Month Plan

.1 UEB RECEIVED the paper (UEB/23/63) from the Director of Internal Audit (IAS) which set out the latest version of the rolling six-month internal audit plan and included both audits linked to strategic risks and to core controls.

.2 UEB RECOMMENDED that the audit plan should include reference to the assurance provided by the University's assurance partner in connection with a selection of the larger strategic change projects.

.3 UEB APPROVED the internal audit plan subject to the recommended addition and to consideration and approval by Audit and Risk Committee.

23.56   Fees, Pricing and Financial Awards – PhD Scholarship Acceleration

.1 UEB RECEIVED the paper (UEB/23/61) from the Deputy Vice-Chancellor. The paper provided an update on phase 2 of activity to reset the University's approach to fees, pricing, and financial awards.

.2 UEB NOTED that whilst a paper setting out the findings from the phase 2 activity and recommendations for future work would be received in August, it had been identified that PhD Scholarship activity should begin immediately to ensure impact on entry in 2024/35

.3 UEB AGREED that the PhD Scholarship activity should be accelerated and further AGREED the establishment of a PGR Task and Finish Group to consider how of the use of PhD Scholarships could be optimised to support research and education.

.4 UEB NOTED that it would receive an implementation plan for PhD Scholarships in October.

23.57   Roundtable

.1 Updates were provided on recruitment activity which included the appointment of both a Chief Executive Officer and a Chair of the Board of Midlands Mindforge, shortlisting for the Vice-

Provost RKE role at UNM with interviews due to take place in June, the appointment of the Director of the Food Systems Institute, and the extension of Professor Tallant's tenure as Head of the School of Humanities.

.2 It was suggested that there was scope for the University to take a more strategic approach to its Royal Society Fellows and ensuring potential opportunities were utilised.

.3 The Registrar reported on the appointment of the free speech tsar and the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill which would receive Royal Assent later in the day. The Free Speech and Academic Freedom Working Group would be reconvened to continue its work.

.4 UEB NOTED with concern the significant reduction in number of applications for nursing programmes both at the University and nationally.

.5 The Director of Human Resources provided an update on local pay negotiations with UNITE and UNISON.