



MINUTES of the 03 May 2019 meeting

Present:

David Lowen (Chair)

Ann Bishop

Dr David Fletcher

Professor Nicki Latham

Gill Webber

Professor Andrew Cooper

Jack Harrison

Professor Peter Marsh

Nick Whitaker

Jean Dent (Deputy Chair)

Charlie Hind

Professor Peter Slee

In attendance:

Kate Harvey

Tracey Lancaster

Professor Andrew Slade

Professor Phil Cardew

Professor Chris Prince

Professor Paul Smith

Phil Harrison

Natalie Saunders

Caroline Thomas

Apologies:

Andy Brown

Jo Norry

Les Everett

Jeanne Keay

Part A: Preliminary Items

Chair's Welcome

135.2018.HEC A quorum being present, the Chair opened the meeting and welcomed attendees.

136.2018.HEC The Chair thanked members of the Board and the University Executive Team for their attendance at the Board of Governors Away Day on 26 April 2019. The sessions held had been extremely useful, and papers from the day would be circulated in due course.

Declaration of interest

137.2018.HEC No declarations of interest were noted.

Minutes for the meeting dated 01 March 2019

138.2018.HEC

The Board AGREED that the minutes of its meeting held on 01 March 2019 were an accurate record (paper reference HEC-2018-042).

Matters arising

- 139.2018.HEC The University Secretary submitted a report on the matters arising from the minutes of the previous meeting of the Board held on 01 March 2019 (paper reference HEC-2018-043).
- 140.2018.HEC
- a) It was **noted** that the option for Governors to be paired with the Students' Union (SU) in addition to Schools and Services would be picked up in preparing the governor pairings for 2019-20 (minute 107.2018.HEC refers). The new independent governors would be offered pairings for the coming year as part of their induction.
 - b) The Director of Estates had presented a session on the Estates Master Plan at the Board Away Day on 26 April (minute 120.2018.HEC(c) refers). The Board would be kept apprised of progress as the plan was consulted on further.

Part B: Strategic Planning Framework

Chair's Report

- 141.2018.HEC The Board received a verbal report from the Chair on the Board's priorities for the academic year 2018/19.
- 142.2018.HEC It was **reported** that:
- The Office for Students (OfS) had written to all Vice Chancellors, expressing concern that student growth forecasts across the sector were unrealistic, which could impact on institutions' financial forecasts and their future financial sustainability. The OfS had requested that the issue be considered by governing bodies
 - (a) The Chair had hosted a meeting of the Committee of University Chairs' (CUC) Northern Group at Leeds Beckett on 11 March. A total of 16 chairs from northern universities had attended for the informal session.
 - (b) The annual Golden Robes Awards had taken place the previous evening, an event jointly hosted by the SU and the University which celebrated staff and student achievement and cooperation. A range of awards had been presented over the course of the event, which had been compered by the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Corporate Communications), with speeches from the Vice Chancellor and SU President.

Vice Chancellor's Report

- 143.2018.HEC The Board received a report from the Vice Chancellor providing a summary of key matters in the higher education sector including issues relating to Government policy and OfS regulation, the Augar Review of Post-18 Education and Funding, Brexit, and economic forecasts (paper reference HEC-2018-044).

Parts of minute 144.2018.HEC are exempt from publication under section 43 (2) (Commercial interests) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

144.2018.HEC It was **noted** that:

- (a) In response to the concerns raised in the OfS' letter regarding reliance on unrealistic student growth forecasts (see minute 099.2018.HEC(a)), the Board was content that the University's financial forecasts were appropriately prudent.
- (b) The Finance, Staffing & Resources Committee and the full Board reviewed the financial forecasts on a quarterly basis, and tested the assumptions on which they were based.
- (c) The Board was satisfied that it understood the uncertainties and changes in the external environment which could potentially impact on future financial sustainability. Both the Finance, Staffing & Resources Committee and the Audit Committee would continue to monitor developments.
- (d) It was agreed that a special briefing session should be arranged for the Finance, Staffing & Resources Committee ahead of its meeting on 11 June 2019 to consider financial sustainability in more detail.
- (e) The Vice Chancellor also reported that the Secretary of State for Education had released a list of those institutions who had been making use of "conditional" unconditional offers during the current recruitment cycle, which was perceived by the Minister to be 'pressure selling'. It was confirmed that Leeds Beckett did not make use of this type of offer and as such had not been included on the list published by the Secretary of State. Grade inflation had also been highlighted as an issue in the media more recently. It was confirmed that the University did investigate where there was a marked change in student outcomes, and that this was usually due to changes made to course structure and teaching approach, and thus not unmerited. School KPIs and action plans focused on supporting students' academic potential and not achieving specific degree class targets.
- (f) The Complete University Guide 2019 rankings had been published. Leeds Beckett was listed at 121st, the same position as in 2018. Scores were weighted across ten categories. While Leeds Beckett had improved in 7 categories, including being ranked at 55th in the country for student satisfaction, key areas for improvement were degree completion and graduate jobs which would facilitate an overall improvement in ranking.

145.2018.HEC The Board **AGREED** that:

- a) A special briefing session should be arranged for the Finance, Staffing & Resources Committee ahead of its meeting on 11 June 2019 to consider financial sustainability in more detail; and that

- b) The Chair would liaise with the Vice Chancellor and University Secretary to respond to the OfS' letter on financial sustainability on behalf of the Board.

Part C: Reports from Committees

Report of the Governance & Nominations Committee – 15 March 2019

146.2018.HEC The Board received a report from the Chair of the Governance & Nominations Committee summarising the proceedings of its meeting on 15 March 2019 (paper reference HEC-2018-045).

Parts of minute 147.2018.HEC are exempt from publication under section 43 (2) (Commercial interests) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

147.2018.HEC The following key points were **noted**:

- (a) The Committee had received an overview of the management of student complaints and academic appeals received during the 2017/18 academic year. A total of 47 formal student complaints had been received, a 15% reduction when compared with 2016/17. There remained a continued focus on informal resolution to help try to prevent complaints escalating which the Committee had welcomed. The number of academic appeals had also decreased with a total of 207 appeal requests received during 2017/18 compared to 238 during 2016/17.
- (b) An annual summary of governance matters relating to the University's subsidiary, associate and investment companies had also been received.
- (c) The Committee had discussed the initial outcomes of the internal effectiveness review of the Board. Minor improvements had been identified which would be made to help improve the effectiveness of the Board, including the re-structuring of the Board agenda. Otherwise, the findings to date had demonstrated that the Board was working effectively. A full report with recommendations would be submitted to the Board at its July meeting.
- (d) The CUC had consulted with the sector on proposals for updating the Higher Education Code of Governance. The University had responded to the consultation, which had also been discussed at the recent CUC Plenary. It was anticipated that the revised Code would be shorter, with the more detailed guidance separated out from the main document. A draft was expected at the October Plenary for consideration.
- (e) The recent Plenary had also considered pensions issues in the sector, particularly relating to the Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS) which was facing substantial increases to both employer and employee contributions and issues of governance. The CUC hoped to ensure a formal governance structure and financial framework was in place to maintain

future sustainability of the scheme. While Leeds Beckett's exposure to USS was limited, it would be impacted by significant changes to the TPS and the changes to the funding of public sector pension schemes wherein schools and further education colleges would be compensated but higher education providers would not.

Report of the Finance, Staffing and Resources Committee – 29 March 2019

148.2018.HEC The Board received a report from the Chair of the Finance, Staffing & Resources Committee providing a summary of its proceedings at its meeting held on 29 March 2019 (paper reference HEC-2018-046).

Sections of minute 149.2018.HEC are exempt from publication under section 43 (2) (Commercial interests) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

149.2018.HEC The following key points were **noted**:

- (a) Revised drafts of the Student and Colleague Mental Health and Wellbeing Action Plans had been presented to the Committee and approved. It was noted that constructive discussions had taken place between the SU and senior colleagues during the development of the action plans.
- (b) The construction of the Creative Arts Building and the Carnegie Teaching and Research Building was behind schedule, but both buildings were on track to be ready for teaching in September 2020 and Semester 2 2020 respectively.
- (c) The Committee received an overview of the University's review of its student residences portfolio. The Committee would consider the portfolio in more detail at future meetings and submit its recommendations to the Board in due course.
- (d) The 2018 Gender Pay gap report was also considered. Leeds Beckett's mean gender pay gap in 2018 was 9.5%, lower than the 10.2% gap in 2017. This was better than the HE sector average of 16.1% mean and 15% median.

Report of the Audit Committee - 12 April 2019

150.2018.HEC The Board received a report from the Chair of the Audit Committee providing a summary of its proceedings at its meeting held on 12 April 2019 (paper reference HEC-2018-047).

Sections of minute 151.2018.HEC are exempt from publication under section 43 (2) (Commercial interests) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

151.2018.HEC The following key points were **noted**:

- (a) The Committee had considered two deep dive reports at its April meeting. The first was an update on preparations for the Teaching Excellence

Framework (TEF), which had demonstrated a thorough and systematic approach to prepare for the TEF, providing both support and challenge to Schools.

- (b) The second report had set out the University's approach to complying with published information requirements, chiefly those set out by the Competition & Markets Authority (CMA). Work in this area was ongoing with good progress made in centralising systems and processes such as those for approving course specifications and any requirements for student consent for change and ensuring adequate oversight.

- (d) The Committee had reviewed the annual TRAC(T) return, a new requirement following the creation of the OfS. The return had been endorsed by the University Executive Team on 26 February and approved by the Chair of the Committee on 27 February.

- (e) A wash-up meeting would be held with KMPG following the final committee meeting of the year, to review the first year of the new contract.

Part D: Financial Sustainability

Student Recruitment Update

Sections of minute 152.2018.HEC are exempt from publication under section 43 (2) (Commercial interests) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

152.2018.HEC The Board received a report from the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Corporate Communications) providing an update on student recruitment (paper reference HEC-2018-048) and the following key points were **noted**:

- (c) The University had undertaken research into the characteristics of those applicants that accepted an offer but failed to enrol.

Financial & Capital Expenditure Update

Sections of minute 153.2018.HEC are exempt from publication under section 43 (2) (Commercial interests) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

153.2018.HEC The Board received a report from the Director of Finance providing the latest financial position (paper reference HEC-2018-049) and the following key points were **noted**:

- (a) The budget for 2019/20 was currently being developed and would be considered by the Finance, Staffing & Resources committee on 11 June 2019, and subsequently by the full Board in July.

Part E: Academic Quality and the Student Experience

Students' Union Report

- 154.2018.HEC The Board received a report from the Students' Union (SU) summarising the work undertaken by the SU since the Board's last meeting on 1 March 2019 and updating the Board about key issues and developments (paper reference HEC-2018-050).
- 155.2018.HEC It was **reported** that:
- (a) 1029 course representatives had been recruited in 2018/19, in comparison with 813 in the previous year. A total of 507 course representatives had received training, in person or online. The target of 7000 face-to-face conversations with students set by the full-time Officer team this year had been exceeded with 8,923 conversations having taken place. Work to increase the number of student-led societies had resulted in the formation of 20 new societies in 2018/19, bringing the total to 61 active societies with 1,660 society members.
 - (b) The Golden Robes event held on 02 May 2019 had been very successful. The SU had enjoyed the opportunity to collaborate with the University once again for the event.
 - (c) School forums had been held in February and April and an increase in attendance by students had been noted, which the SU felt was due to the inclusion of the forums on the main timetable. Issues raised at a school forum meeting were circulated to the relevant Subject Leader who would then take action, supported where necessary by their Dean. The SU monitored the action plans from each school, as did the Academic Quality & Standards Committee and governors noted that some issues such as timetabling and the scheduling of assessments had been picked up in the Academic Assurance report submitted to the Board. The action plans were also submitted to each meeting of the Academic Board for information.
 - (d) With regard to wider sector engagement, the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Corporate Communications) confirmed that that students' unions would be invited to submit critical interpretations of providers' Access and Participation Plans, based on the lived experiences of their members. Additionally, the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic) confirmed that a statement from the SU would be submitted alongside Leeds Beckett's TEF submission.
- 156.2018.HEC The Board **AGREED** that future Students' Union reports at each meeting should include relevant updates on course representatives and the school forums.

Academic Assurance Report

157.2018.HEC The Board received a report from the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic) providing assurance to the Board on the University's approach to academic quality and standards (paper reference HEC-2018-051).

Parts of minute 158.2018.HEC are exempt from publication under section 43 (2) (Commercial Interests) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

158.2018.HEC The following points were **noted**:

- (a) The report formed part of the annual cycle of reporting on academic assurance to the Board and focussed on the end of cycle feedback from postgraduate taught external examiners; the annual review of postgraduate taught provision; and a progress update from the Academic Quality & Standards Committee (AQSC) on the implementation of its action plan.
- (b) The report also included a mapping of the evidence provided against the ongoing conditions of registration set out by the Office for Students.

159.2018.HEC The Board **AGREED** that the Academic Assurance Report provided assurance that:

- (a) Leeds Beckett's quality assurance framework and processes were effective;
- (b) the management of academic quality and standards for taught provision was sound;
- (c) the University was responding to any issues or concerns arising, with action plans in place for the continuous improvement of the student academic experience and outcomes; and
- (d) the evidence presented supported continued alignment with Office for Students conditions of registration and that Leeds Beckett continued to meet the expectations of the Office for Students, the UK Quality Code and the standards of Part 1 of the European Standards and Guidelines (2015).

Part G: Governance & Compliance

Health & Safety Update

160.2018.HEC The Board received a report on health and safety matters from the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Resources) (paper reference HEC-2018-052).

Parts of minute 161.2018.HEC are exempt from publication under section 41 (2) (Information provided in confidence) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

161.2018.HEC It was **reported** that:

- (a) Leeds Beckett had received a RoSPA Gold Award for the 10th consecutive year.

Annual Health & Safety Audit Report

- 162.2018.HEC The Board received a report from the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Resources) on the annual health and safety audit (paper reference HEC-2018-053).
- 163.2018.HEC It was **noted** that the Safety, Health & Wellbeing Committee would be monitoring a number of recommendations regarding the prioritisation of health and safety training participation, updating driver records in relation to off campus work, and display screen equipment. Progress against these actions would be reviewed at future meetings.

Minute 164.2018.HEC is exempt from publication under section 43 (2) (Commercial Interests) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

Office for Students: Reportable Events

- 165.2018.HEC The University Secretary advised that there were no reportable events to make the Board aware of since the last meeting.
- 166.2018.HEC The OfS had confirmed that Leeds Beckett was not at higher risk of non-compliance with regard to the Prevent Duty following the submission of the annual return in December 2018, and as such would not be subject to a risk-based review visit.

Draft Schedule of Meetings 2019/20

- 167.2018.HEC The Board received a report from the University secretary outlining the proposed schedule of meetings for the Board and its Commitments for 2019/20 (paper reference HEC-2018-054).
- 168.2018.HEC The following key points were **noted**:
- (a) The outcomes of the Board Effectiveness Review had been taken into account when drafting the schedule, as well as any preferences expressed by potential new independent governors.
 - (b) The number of meetings of the Governance & Nominations Committee would be reduced from 4 to 3 for 2019/20.
- 169.2018.HEC The Board **APPROVED** the schedule.

Access & Participation Plan

- 170.2018.HEC The Board received a report from the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Corporate Communications) on the work in progress and the project plan to deliver an Access & Participation Plan (APP) by 01 July 2019 (paper reference HEC-2018-

055). Academic Board and the Board of Governors would be consulted as part of the process.

Parts of minute 171.2018.HEC are exempt from publication under section 43 (2) (Commercial Interests) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

171.2018.HEC The following key points were **noted**:

- (a) The APP Oversight Group would be formalised with a schedule of work feeding into the annual University committee cycle, reporting to Academic Board and Governance & Nominations Committee as appropriate.
- (b) The 2020 APPs would be valid for a five-year period, and the OfS had specified that an institution's APP should represent a "whole provider strategic approach" throughout its development.
- (c) The OfS had also emphasised the importance of data analysis to inform the preparation of APPs.
- (d) The OfS had also set out a number of key performance measures which providers were also expected to deliver against, in addition to provider-specific priorities in each APP.
- (e) Much of the activity the OfS intended institutions to implement and monitor via their APPs was consistent with work already underway to improve key areas such as retention and graduate jobs under Leeds Beckett's Education Strategy, its recruitment policies and employer engagement activities.

172.2018.HEC The Board **approved** the process set out in the paper for consultation with governors and the student body as part of the development of the APP.

Part G: Items for Information

Schedule of meetings and business for 2018/19

173.2018.HEC The Committee received its schedule of meetings and business for 2018/19 (paper reference HEC-2018-056).

Date of next meeting

174.2018.HEC The next Board meeting would take place on Friday 12 July 2019 at 09:30 in Old Broadcasting House, City Campus

Part H: Other Business

Vote of Thanks

175.2018.HEC The Students' Union President would step down from office on 30 June 2019, and as such this was his last meeting. The Chair presented thanks on behalf of the

Board for the SU President's contributions during his tenure, and in particular the good work leading his SU colleagues in presenting to and interacting with Board members.

Confirmed by the Board as a correct record and signed by the Chair:

Signed: _____ Date: _____