

BISHOP GROSSETESTE UNIVERSITY

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MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE  
SPONSOR BOARD

THURSDAY 25 FEBRUARY 2016  
10.00AM IN ROOM CSH5

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**Present**

Professor David Head (Chair)  
Mr David Babb  
Mr Stephen Deville  
Professor Jayne Mitchell  
The Revd. Canon Professor Peter Neil  
The Revd. Dr Sally Myers

**In attendance**

Dr Anne K Craven, Registrar and Secretary (R&S)  
Dr Grahame Killey, Planning & Performance Manager (PPM)  
Professor David Rae, Executive Dean, Research & Knowledge Exchange (ED, RKE)  
Dr Ruth Sayers, Executive Dean, Learning, Teaching & International (ED, LTI)  
Mrs Natalie Pickles, Governance Officer & PA to University Council

**1 Welcome**

The Chair welcomed members to the Sponsor Board and in particular Ruth Sayers and David Rae who had been invited to provide updates on their areas of work.

**2 Apologies**

Apologies had been RECEIVED from Mr Roger Mosey.

**3 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

**4 Minutes of the last meeting held on 4 November 2015**

The minutes of the last meeting held on 4<sup>th</sup> November 2015 were RECEIVED by the Board and APPROVED as a true and accurate record. The Chair was authorised to sign them.

## 5 Matters Arising

### (i) Action Points

The Board RECEIVED the table of actions from the previous meeting and NOTED that actions had been completed.

It was also NOTED:-

#### Item 7(i) Strategy Themes – Overview of performance dashboard

- Learning, Teaching, Student Engagement and Participation
- It had been confirmed that ITT students would be included in the National Student Survey 2016 but there was no further commitment given for 2017 and beyond at this stage. The Deputy Vice Chancellor confirmed that BGU's current NSS Survey responses were broadly in line with last year and that the University was confident a 75% response rate would be achieved (sector average is 70%).

### (ii) Matters Arising

There were no other matters to discuss.

## 6 To receive and discuss Strategy themes

### (i) Overview of performance – dashboard

The PPM referred members to the dashboard showing performance management of strategy implementation as well as to the supplementary strategy theme update reports provided by the Strategy Theme Leads; the reports outlined 2014/15 achievements and priorities for 2015/16.

The PPM asked members to NOTE that the direction of travel had changed in three areas since the previous meeting. This was shown by a purple arrow and included the following:

- Academic Portfolio (Marketing and Recruitment)
- Research (Research Staff Recruitment)
- External Engagement (Employability and Entrepreneurship)

### (ii) Strategy Theme Updates

Each of the strategy theme leads provided an update on their areas.

#### Change management

Significant positive change had been facilitated and managed across BGU. This strategy theme had an amber rating with upward arrows in respect of improvement; apart from the 'Staff Survey' (indicator with a sideways arrow), however, this was now well under way.

- **Leadership and Management Development Programme**  
A decision had been taken to go with a Leadership Foundation in Higher Education programme, delivered by an external provider and to be built around the University's strategy and modules. This would be developed as a programme for both the Corporate Leadership Team and Senior Leadership Team. The programme had not yet started, hence the amber rating; however, it would commence this academic year and run for 12 months.
- **Communications Group**  
This had been established by the University with the intention of ensuring true engagement of staff and consistent messaging internally and externally. Part of this Group's remit was also to look more at the presence and external positioning of the University in respect of bidding for research contracts etc.
- **Centre for Learning and Teaching (CELT)**  
Focus to be more aligned to staff development needs (particularly academic) but was also about getting accreditation by the Higher Education Academy (HEA). The activities of this Centre are aligned to the Bishop Grosseteste University strategy.

It was NOTED that steps were being taken by CELT to accelerate the HEA accreditation of academic staff by means of a new taught programme (PGCHE) in addition to the existing portfolio route. The Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education (PGCHE) would be validated in time for delivery from September 2016. Many visiting tutors and colleagues in collaborative institutions would also be able to take advantage of this.

The DVC reported that the Head of Human Resources (HR) and Head of the School of Humanities were working closely together to look at mapping out clear progression routes and opportunities for academic staff and plotting this with how the Learning and Development Policy, from an HR view, could support having teaching qualifications and qualifications to teach.

- **Staff survey**  
Since the last staff survey, 46 new academic staff had joined the University. The related staff turnover had been managed very smoothly and contributed significantly to the process of institutional transformation.

The Committee NOTED that the current staff survey was now under way with the closing date of 18<sup>th</sup> March approaching. The members would be interested in seeing the outcome, particularly in light of all the new staff, and whether the changes within the institution might have impacted on the broader staff base.

The DVC reported that in addition to the recent Ofsted inspection and the QAA Higher Education Review that had just taken place, the University had also been visited by **the British Psychological Society which now had approved both the single and joint honours for accreditation.**

The Sponsor Board Committee CONFIRMED their view that the positive outcome of the OFSTED inspection and of the QAA Higher Education Review

(the latter of which highlighted as examples of good practice academic and pastoral support for students, strategic embedding of the 'Students Creating Change' scheme across Schools and professional services, the comprehensive and integrated annual monitoring process, and the extensive, systematic and sustained provision of student employability opportunities, accompanied by detailed University-wide support) together with the accreditation of the Single Honours and Joint Honours courses in Psychology by the British Psychological Society were all clear external verification of the progress made in embedding a culture of continuous improvement in the institution and confirmation that the new institutional objectives were the correct ones.

Sponsor Board AGREED to invite the University Council to congratulate the University on these significant achievements and formally to acknowledge the scale of the change that had been achieved and of the wide-ranging institutional effort that lay behind it.

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The Committee NOTED that in respect of external quality assurance and the Teaching Excellence Framework, the University would need to continue to adapt and continuously improve.

The Vice Chancellor reported that a further review from the Higher Education Funding Council would be taking place on 15<sup>th</sup> March (HEFCE Assurance Review) which would focus on Council, Governance and financial assurance.

#### Learning, Teaching & Student Engagement

The Committee NOTED that this strategy theme had green indicators against all activities apart from 'Creative Learning and Teaching Spaces' which was coded amber and required more focus on innovative ways of working, digital campus development and thinking more imaginatively.

It was NOTED that a Learning and Teaching Advocate from each academic School reported into CELT to ensure that developments in learning and teaching were embedded. CELT would facilitate enhanced partnership working across the University, including with students.

CELT would embed research in learning, investigate ways in which technology-led teaching and learning could affect the culture of the institution, and look into the effective use of teaching and learning space. The Head of Estates confirmed that he belonged to the University Estates Directors' sectoral group and therefore had access to innovations within the sector. He was able to feed this into the Learning and Teaching Spaces Group, which he was now a member of.

There had been an increase in the number of students needing counselling for mental health issues, which was part of a sector-wide trend.

The roll-out of the diagnostic/learning and detection tool Turnitin had been welcomed by students.

## Academic Portfolio

Significant steps had been taken the previous year by the Portfolio Implementation Team in terms of validating new programmes and discontinuing 30+ pathways. For 16/17, the Portfolio Management Group (PMG) was established as the strategic group managing portfolio.

It was NOTED that recruitment for 16/17 was coded amber. In the context of a volatile and competitive higher education environment, considerable effort was being put into the process of converting undergraduate applications to firm acceptances in order to ensure that targets were being met. The PMG had just approved a final set of student forecast numbers with the headcount predicted to be marginally up, and the institution was on track to reach a total of 3,300 full-time students enrolled on credit-bearing courses by 2019/2020.

Student numbers registered on non-credit bearing short courses and those credit-bearing courses that were offered by partner Colleges, which both contributed to the overall headcount target student number referenced in the Institutional Strategy (n = 4,500), were also being monitored. The estimate reflected the emphasis being placed on reliable and realistic student number projections by the Director of Resources and the University's Planning Group.

The Committee NOTED that it was very encouraging to see new degree subjects were proving attractive in the student market and therefore living up to the University's expectations. The process of portfolio renewal was continuing. New modes of delivery of the existing portfolio were also being investigated.

There would be a year's delay in delivering the Higher Education/Degree Apprenticeships; the planned start date had been March 2016. This was because the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills had decided to draw up a set of new standards. The University was involved in this process.

The institution was working to position itself for collaborative working with FE and HE; the related indicators were currently coded amber and red respectively.

## Research

- The new Research and Knowledge Exchange Strategy had been signed off by the Research Committee and Academic Enhancement Committee, and would be presented to Senate the following month. This strategy brought together research and knowledge exchange, innovation, and the development of an inclusive research community.
- As part of this, a Research and Innovation Centre had been created and a bid to the GLLEP European Structural Innovation Fund for £1.6m had been submitted. If successful, the income would fund two capital build projects that would house the 'Lincolnshire Open Research and Innovation Centre'. The University had gained the strong support of the CEO of the Lincolnshire Co-op for the bid. The Centre would work with businesses and Third Sector organisations to create an on online open access repository called 'BG Research online' – it was planned that this would come on stream in April. In

this connection, a dialogue had begun with Lincolnshire County Council.

- Six members of BGU academic staff had been approved by the University of Leicester as doctoral student supervisors. A number of applications for recently advertised PhD studentships had been received. It was NOTED that recruitment of doctoral students was crucial to the University's relationship with Leicester. A recruitment campaign had commenced prior to Christmas, and the University was confident it would get some PhD students starting this academic year.
- Research income was coded amber, and the target was to increase the figure (currently projected at £22k for this year). The University had committed 3 years to a subscription package called Research Professional. REF income was attached to this with the aim of raising the number of grant applications submitted.
- The Committee AGREED it would be useful to have a presentation on 'research and innovation' from the new Head of Research at an autumn Council meeting.
- It was NOTED that the Research Excellence Framework, to which the University had made a successful submission, was being reviewed by Lord Stern. Although this was likely to lead to modifications, these would not affect the intention of the University to submit more academic staff to more Units of Assessment next time. Sponsor Board AGREED this should be flagged up to Council
- Sponsor Board welcomed the news that the Executive Dean for Research and Knowledge Exchange had submitted an application for a place on the Innovation Council.
- Sponsor Board AGREED that Council should be notified that the Sponsor Board strongly endorsed the University's commitment to developing its research profile and the steps being taken to achieve this. It would invite Council to do the same and also to note that public perception of the University's research effort and achievements was likely to prove crucial to continued success in this area of activity.

Natalie  
Pickles/  
Kate  
Adams

Chair/  
Sponsor  
Board

Chair/  
Sponsor  
Board

#### Internationalisation

The 'Internationalising the Curriculum' Toolkit was officially published in December 2015 by the HEA, and Internationalising the Curricula would be the theme of this year's BG Global Conference in May, which would focus upon engaging teams with the process of using the toolkit. Work was also taking place in the areas of internationalisation of research, international projects, international partnerships and recruitment of international students. Governance arrangements and related documentation had been developed and put in place.

Sponsor Board CONFIRMED it was satisfied that the initiatives being taken at this juncture were the right ones.

The Chair recorded Sponsor Board's thanks to the Executive Dean, Learning, Teaching and International for her and the team's efforts in this area.

#### External engagement – Employability and Enterprise

Increasing BA Business (Team Entrepreneurship) recruitment for 2016/2017 was a priority. Among the initiatives being undertaken to achieve this had been a convention for Year 9 pupils involving five schools and over 400 pupils.

An area of the BGU website for business had been developed with access from the BGU home page. Content included the promotion of Higher Education/Degree Apprenticeships, KTPs and vacancy services. A much improved area on the website had been created for students and alumni with extensive information across Careers, Employability and Enterprise issues.

#### External Engagement – Partnerships and Community

Key achievements included raising BGU's profile overall, also through marketing efforts in new communities; organisation and delivery of short courses and performances as well as other events delivered in/for the community; achievement of website developments; and creation of links between Graduate Attributes, the curriculum and engagement with BGU's communities. Moreover, the University's School Partnership was being developed further and various school governance models had been explored.

Major community-related bids had been submitted (ESIF, ERDF), and a conference focusing on present-day society, Church and secularisation would be organised by the Chaplain and a working group at BGU in 2016.

The University was working towards the adopting of a 'manifesto' for public engagement used by a number of UK HEIs (*The Engaged University: A Manifesto for Public Engagement*, of the Beacons for Public Engagement Initiative funded by the Funding Councils, RCUK and the Wellcome Trust); in connection with that, the University was raising the profile of volunteering further at BGU.

#### Environment & Sustainability

Following a successful financial year in 2014/15 and improved position for 2015/16, BGU was taking steps to advancing Phase 2 of the Constance Stewart Hall development to deliver seven additional teaching spaces and allow for reconfiguration of space in the Skinner Building for offices due to increased academic staff numbers.

A meeting with members of the City Council to outline the University's ambition and future plans for the estate was being arranged. Sponsor Board AGREED this should be a restricted item.

The Head of Estates had REPORTED he had also undertaken an audit of the estate along with the International Manager to begin a process of planning estates requirements associated with the recruitment of international students.

Sponsor Board AGREED that it would be timely to see a revised Estates Strategy in the new academic year.

Stephen Deville

**7 To receive and consider agenda suggestions for next meeting**

It was AGREED to re-organise the Agenda for the next meeting so that those items at the end this time round would be given sufficient time at the start of the meeting so that they could be discussed more fully.

It was further AGREED that 3 hours should be set aside for Sponsor Board meetings.

Natalie Pickles

**8 To recommend Key Items for University Council**

It was AGREED that the Chair of Sponsor Board would produce a list of key items to present as a paper for Council.

Chair/  
Sponsor  
Board

**9 Any Other Business**

There was no other business to discuss.

**10 Date of next meeting**

The next meeting of the Sponsor Board will take place on Friday 3 June 2016 at 10.00am – 1.00pm.

Signed .....



Date .....

03/06/16