

BISHOP GROSSETESTE UNIVERSITY

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
SPONSOR BOARD

FRIDAY 3 JUNE 2016
10.00AM IN JOHN TOMLINSON SUITE, SKINNER BUILDING

Present

Professor David Head (Chair)
Mr Roger Mosey (by Skype)
Mr David Babb
Mr Stephen Deville
The Revd. Canon Professor Peter Neil
The Revd. Dr Sally Myers

In attendance

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)
Mr Matthew Pitts, Governance, Compliance & Operations Manager (GCOM)
Mrs Natalie Pickles, Governance Officer & PA to University Council

1 Welcome

The Chair welcomed members to the Sponsor Board and in particular Matthew Pitts, the new Governance, Compliance & Operations Manager (GCOM) who was attending his first Sponsor Board meeting.

It was noted by the Chair that although Sponsor Board had agreed to increase the time slot to three hours (from two hours), it didn't necessarily mean that the discussions would last that long.

2 Apologies

Apologies had been RECEIVED from Professor Jayne Mitchell and Dr Anne K Craven.

3 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

4 Minutes of the last meeting held on 25 February 2016

The minutes of the last meeting held on 25th February 2016 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.

(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 Red/Amber/Green (RAG) rated 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 gave an overview of the current dashboard and changes since the last update:-

Change Management

Had changed from amber to green flag following progress in this area.

Learning, Teaching & Student Engagement (LTSE)

Coded with green flag – as before.

Academic Portfolio

Marketing & Recruitment and Forward Planning for changes to portfolio for 2017/18 both remained amber coded.

Research

The Research Staff Recruitment flag remained coded amber.

Internationalisation

Recruitment of international students was coded red, but with positive upward arrows maintained (as with previous update).

Internationalisation of the curriculum remained amber – again with upward arrows in recognition of progress.

External Engagement

This was showing an amber flag with positive trajectory and three underlying green areas. The PPM noted that the Programme Board was driving for greater efficiency in terms of its remit, and that Employability & Entrepreneurship and Partnerships & Community would in the future become a combined theme rather than being separate.

Environment & Sustainability

This was showing a green flag.

The Chair of Sponsor Board (SB) asked about the comment at the bottom of the Learning, Teaching, Student Engagement & Participation theme which stated "BGU does not realise the full potential of partnerships with students and falls behind the rest of the HE sector as a result". The Executive Director, Learning Teaching & International (ED, LTI) confirmed that this was only identified as a possible risk. In actual fact BGU was making rapid progress in this area, with the appointment of Joe Levell (Student Engagement Officer) and an excellent relationship with the S.U. and Sabbatical Officers. In addition, work was already under way to address issues that the TEF was likely to raise. Furthermore the HER QAA highlighted this area as demonstrating good practice. It was NOTED that the current momentum needed to be sustained in this area to ensure that students were participating and working with staff in every part of BGU's academic life, from designing curricula through to assessment.

(ii) Strategy Theme Updates

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

Environment & Sustainability

The Director of Resources (DoR) reported that the Estates Strategy had been presented at the Finance, Employment & General Purposes Committee the previous day, and the Committee had recommended the Strategy for approval, subject to one minor text amendment. He noted the following key points from the Strategy:-

- The Estates Strategy had allowed BGU to build capital expenditure figures into the financial forecast.
- The Strategy did not go into specifics of what particular spaces would be utilised, but highlighted areas of the current campus that could be developed or regenerated for appropriate and better use. This was to allow for a more strategic view to be taken as to the best use of space, and to respond appropriately to what the institution needed throughout the strategy period.
- The Strategy didn't focus on student accommodation, but mainly on office and teaching space; this was because BGU had decided to look externally for the provision of accommodation and was working with external developers in this.
- BGU was still pursuing the potential option of the land purchase, which SD would be following up on a monthly basis to see when the Council was in a better position to take this forward.
- In the short-to-medium term, BGU had the means to provide student accommodation. It was noted that last year student numbers increased but requests for accommodation decreased (although there was still a high demand).

The DoR also reported the following:

- The second phase of works to Constance Stewart Hall (CSH) had now been submitted for planning approval. It was hoped that it would not need to go to Planning Committee, and that delegated authority might be used by the planning officers (which normally occurs if fewer than 4 objections are received). The Planning decision was expected by the end of July. A potential financial risk was highlighted to FE & GP the previous day concerning placing an order for steel for the project prior to receiving planning permission; this would be to enable timescales for delivery to be met. FE&GP had approved placing the order, given that the financial impact, should planning permission not be given, would be small relative to the whole scheme costs (£3m).
- A bid had been submitted to the European Structural Investment Fund (ESIF) for the Lincolnshire Open Research and Innovation Centre (LORIC). The bid was successful in the first stage, and BGU was now required to submit planning for the LORIC, which involved purchase of office space for refurbishing. This will house PhD students as well as people from outside the University within a number of small business incubation units. Sixty per cent of the cost of the project would be funded by the ESIF. Some initial costs would be incurred prior to confirmation of the outcome of the bid. This spend had been approved by FE&GP the previous day.
- It was noted that the off-campus location of the LORIC building also provided an opportunity for BGU to meet another strategic aim of providing resilience with the internet connection (which would be a separate system to the main campus).

SB noted the new emphasis on using the estate as efficiently and effectively as possible. With phase two of CSH providing additional space, serious consideration would be given to achieving more efficient use of teaching space across the campus, e.g. by means of a longer teaching day.

Sponsor
Board /
David
Head

Academic Portfolio

In the absence of the Deputy Vice Chancellor, the Planning & Programmes Manager (PPM) presented this item and highlighted the following key points:

- Green flags were indicated for Strategic Management of Portfolio, Programme Validation for 16/17 and Staffing of Posts to support the Academic Portfolio
- An amber flag was indicated for Marketing & Recruitment (Applications) where a great deal of work was ongoing to convert applications into enrolments.
- Portfolio Planning was still showing amber but a great deal of creative and innovative work was happening in terms of new course development, particularly around Health & Social Care.

It was noted by SB that the increasingly competitive UK higher education environment had significant implications for the academic portfolio and its development. It was AGREED that it would be useful to have an update on INTERNATIONALISATION over the Council meeting lunchtime slot in September, to be given by the Executive Dean, Learning, Teaching & International and the International Team.

Ruth
Sayers /
Natalie
Pickles

As a result of this, a discussion ensued regarding the timetable for lunchtime presentations at Council Meetings. The following were AGREED:-

- Sponsor Board wished to highlight to Council that they felt more time should be given to those giving lunchtime presentations prior to Council meetings and suggested that this be done for the September meeting – especially given that this meeting generally has a shorter Agenda than others in the year.
- In addition, it was felt that Sponsor Board’s reporting into Council of key discussions was a crucial item and should be near to the top of Council Agenda, given that Sponsor Board was reporting on progress with implementation of Corporate Strategy. The Chair of SB and the Registrar & Secretary to liaise with the Chair of Council in this respect.
- For the June meeting the lunchtime slot would stay as currently planned.

Sponsor Board / David Head

David Head

Sponsor Board discussed the large amount of work being done on portfolio development, and the institution’s strategic direction relating to this. As part of this the members discussed, what ‘type and brand’ of institution BGU was and what it wanted to be ‘known’ for (previously teacher training). The Vice Chancellor confirmed that the Academic Portfolio was a carefully managed one with a huge amount of work and market research going on behind the scenes.

The ED, LTI reported that she was just setting up a year-long project to look at placement learning, in order to establish much more clearly the effectiveness of placements in BGU courses, and the relationship of that with BGU’s DLHE (Destination of Leavers from Higher Education) statistics. It was AGREED this was a key theme to highlight to Council, in respect of demonstrating an evidence-based approach to placements. If there was a definite correlation with employability then BGU would need to place greater emphasis on placements.

Sponsor Board/ David Head

Sponsor Board members reflected on the undergraduate and postgraduate portfolio being developed, as well as the need for creative delivery and virtual learning environments. It was noted that PG courses did not necessarily need to be ‘attached’ to UG courses.

Internationalisation

The ED, LTI highlighted the key points for this Strategy Theme:-

- Although a red flag was indicated for recruitment, a great deal of work on recruitment had been successfully completed - the upwards arrows represented a positive picture in terms of achievement and reflected that progress was being made.
- The infrastructure was in place for recruitment of international students. There were 10 – 12 Agents working on behalf of BGU, and all required policies and procedures were in place for working with them.
- Around twenty applications from international students were currently being processed.
- Work was underway to internationalise the curricula and to emphasise global citizenship, with a focus on cultural awareness and cultural intelligence.

It was NOTED by members that there was an increasing degree of specificity in the Strategy Theme reports, but they could not see many tangible targets relating to the delivery of internationalisation, one of the benefits of which would be the non-UK students' having a more globalised educational experience.

It was AGREED that Council's attention should be drawn to the twenty applications from international students.

It was also AGREED that the ED, LTI would put together examples of projects and work being undertaken by the International Office so that the Chair of Sponsor Board could include these in his Key Items for Council report. It was noted that the VC would also include this in his update to Council. The Chair of Sponsor Board agreed to liaise with the VC about this.

External Engagement

- Partnerships & Community

In the absence of the Registrar and Secretary, the PPM reported that Programme Board had recommended that in the interests of promoting greater efficiency and in view of the planned inclusion of a new strategy strand to be led by the Registrar and Secretary, public engagement activity should in the future be incorporated into the work of the Stakeholder Engagement Group. Most of this work could have a natural fit with the Stakeholder Engagement Group.

Reporting on achievements within this strand, the PPM stated that one key achievement of the work of the Public Engagement Group led by the Registrar and Secretary was that it had made significant progress in the area of 'staff volunteering', which was linked to BGU's signing up to the National Manifesto of Public Engagement; a proposal for these was now ready to be submitted to SLT. The Chair of SB commended the work completed by the Public Engagement Group and noted that volunteering had potential significance in terms of the University's PR profile, and suggested that "Reach Volunteering" would be a useful website for the Public Engagement Group to look at. Sponsor Board also suggested that it might be useful to include in the Staff Volunteering proposal some target areas where BGU would like its staff to volunteer, with the aim of tying this in with the University's PR strategy.

- Employability & Entrepreneurship

The Executive Dean, Research & Knowledge Exchange (ED RKE) reported that the Stakeholder Engagement Strategy had now been completed and had just this week been presented and approved by Senate. Other key items to report in this strategy theme were as follows:

- BGU's visibility with employers was increasing – ED RKE had a monthly column in "Lincolnshire Business" and links with the Greater Lincolnshire Local Enterprise Partnership (GLLEP) continued to grow.
- A "Graduate Attributes" project was being taken forward which was

Sponsor
Board /
David
Head

David
Head/
Peter Neil

Grahame
Killey /
Anne
Craven

developing graduate ownership and transferability of skills, with the aim of developing a more enterprising culture on campus.

- Bidding opportunities were currently being pursued, overlapping with research. There were two bids, one for the Research & Innovation Centre (incorporating BG Futures 2 project) from the European Structural Innovation Fund (previously reported on by the DoR). The second bid, submitted the previous week under the business growth theme of ESIF funding "Business Inspiration", was around developing entrepreneurial skills for graduates and within existing businesses and would increase graduate employment opportunities.

- Research

- 6 PhD studentship offers had been made. These had been approved by the University of Leicester. The offers represented a significant breakthrough.
- A research audit of staff had taken place which would provide a starting point for the next Research Excellence Framework (REF) exercise.

The ED RKE reported that the PhD students would be contributing more broadly to the enrichment of the student experience, as it was part of their contract to engage with Schools, be involved in talk programmes, possibly to offer teaching, and generally to have a wider engagement within the University. It was AGREED that they be invited to one of Council's future lunches to talk about their research interests.

David
Rae/
Matthew
Pitts

Learning, Teaching & Student Engagement

The Executive Dean, Learning, Teaching & International reported on the key items for this strategy theme:

- BGU had worked very hard on graduate attributes and had an action plan for embedding these.
- There were 25 projects currently ongoing with students creating change (this work was highlighted by the QAA as being an example of good practice).
- CELT was well established and had worked very closely with the Higher Education Academy (HEA) to deliver a staff development series. Fifty events have been held since January of this year; these would culminate in the Learning & Teaching Conference being held on 7th and 8th July.
- CELT was looking to gain accreditation for the UK Professional Standards Framework (PSF) for staff.
- The Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education (PGCHE), which was aligned to fellowship of the HEA, had just been validated; this would be compulsory for new members of teaching staff who had no teaching qualification.

The Vice Chancellor commented that in the FE&GP meeting the previous day a discussion had taken place regarding the academic to professional staff ratio, but that there were a few key professional staff roles which were going to be recruited to which were essential to the activities highlighted above by the ED LTI.

These posts, whilst not academic, were essential in enhancing the work of Learning and Teaching.

Change Management

It was agreed to discuss this item later given that the VC would soon be leaving the meeting.

7 To discuss a stock take of the Five Year Strategy for 2016/17

The Vice Chancellor reported that there had always been a plan to review the Strategic Plan at the halfway stage. It had been agreed between SLT and Uniac that it was appropriate for the executive to look at this and obtain external validation. It was acknowledged that external factors had changed considerably since the strategy was approved; current data should be reviewed, with a view to establishing if the strategy was still fit for purpose, especially in the current context involving key developments in higher and further education and in the University's external engagement. A full review would take place between now and December. A new Head of Planning had just been appointed who would play a key role in the review.

The Vice Chancellor left the meeting at this point.

6 (ii) Strategy Theme Updates

Change Management

The PPM highlighted the key areas for noting with this Strategy Theme:-

- The Leadership & Management Development Programme flag was now green (instead of amber) – an external provider would be commissioned to deliver this programme for CLT with links to the Leadership Foundation.
- The Staff Survey flag was amber but would be green next time. Engagement in this survey was extremely high and would be reported to Council on 28 June. It was reported that initial results showed that some positive, even impressive things had come out of the survey, and that staff were generally positive about the programme of change taking place in the institution. SB NOTED that this was really good news.

7. To receive and consider agenda suggestions for next meeting

It was AGREED the Agenda would incorporate the usual Strategy Theme items.

Natalie Pickles

8 To recommend Key Items for University Council

It was AGREED that the Chair of Sponsor Board and Governance Office would work together on the items to be highlighted to Council.

Chair/
Sponsor
Board

9 Any Other Business

There was no other business to discuss.

10 Date of next meeting

