



MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

FRIDAY 7 OCTOBER 2016

Present: Ms T Beech, Professor H Brady, Mr D Burn (Chair), Mr R Cowap, Mx J Cross, Ms J Goldstein, Dr M Hamlin, Ms L Ho, Sir R Kerr, Professor B Lumb, Dr J Manley, Professor S Mann, Mr R Massie, Professor G Orpen, Mr A Poolman, Mr M Saddiq, Ms A Stephenson.

In attendance: Mr M Ames, Professor N Canagarajah, Mr S Chadwick, Ms N Dandridge, Ms R Geller, Mr A Grice, Ms K Gullon (Clerk), Professor J Iredale, Mr R Kerse, Dr R Lart, Professor N Lieven, Ms L Robinson, Professor J Squires.

Apologies: Mr P Hand, Dr S-A Kitts, Dr E Lithander, Mr J Wetz.

1. Welcome and announcements

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed members of the Board of Trustees to the first Board meeting of the year.
- 1.2 In particular, the Chair welcomed Mr Robert Kerse and Mr Steve Chadwick to their first meetings as Chief Financial Officer and Director of Strategy Planning and Change, respectively.
- 1.3 The Chair advised members of the Board that, although the meeting contained a substantive development element, it was being convened as a formal Board meeting for the duration of the day.
- 1.4 The Vice-Chancellor welcomed members of the Board and reflected on the start of the academic year. In particular:
 - Welcome Week had been a particular success, with the University working in partnership with the Students' Union to deliver a positive start to students' experience at Bristol.
 - The University had also enjoyed a number of major research funding successes.
 - Professor Mann had notably had several high-profile papers published recently.
 - Despite pressures in the national and international arenas, the University had largely succeeded in meeting its targets for student recruitment.
- 1.6 The Vice-Chancellor reflected on Strategy implementation, and noted that he was heartened by the sophisticated, frank and honest conversations happening across the institution with regard to the need for change. Those conversations were infused by a real sense of pride in the institution, and also an appetite for the University to be more bold in respect of its critical issues and new ventures. In particular, the collective dialogue surrounding the student experience appeared to have shifted, which augured well for the Strategic direction of the University. The University had been very encouraged by the external reaction to the Strategy too, with reassuringly positive feedback from alumni, funders and government. This was a credit to staff, students and leaders across the institution. The Board was also thanked warmly for its support and challenge in developing the University Strategy.

- 1.7 The Vice-Chancellor emphasised the importance of co-creation and co-development of implementation plans for the Strategy, and the University was very much pressing ahead with this activity. In particular, the University was keen to ensure the Heads of School were empowered to deliver the Strategy. This approach was embodied by the recent Planning Conference, and both the Chief Financial Officer and the Director of Strategy, Planning and Change had been integral to the success of that event as well as contributing valuable thinking to the University's ambitions more generally. The Vice-Chancellor reflected that the University would need to be flexible and adaptable in respect of Strategy delivery – the Strategy was very much a 'living document'. Although its core principles and priorities were unlikely to change, the timeframes for its implementation might have to.
- 1.8 The Vice-Chancellor reflected on the integral contributions made to date by the Pro Vice-Chancellors (Health) and (Internationalisation and Student Recruitment). The institution-wide discussion regarding internationalisation had been transformed in the preceding year, with all Schools now understanding their importance in achieving the University's aims. In respect of health, the work in this area was also paying substantial dividends – notably with recent funding successes.
- 1.9 Relationships with Bristol City Council continued to be positive and fruitful, and the Council was keen to publically announce its plans for Strategic partnership with the University.
- 1.10 In summary, the Vice-Chancellor noted that whilst the Strategy was very much proving to be fit for purpose, it was not going to be easy to achieve. This was particularly pertinent in the current external climate. For example, the forthcoming Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) would take three year historical data, which would of course not capture the many positive improvements that had recently been made (eg, in respect of the National Student Survey (NSS)). As part of Strategy implementation, it would be necessary to continue to interrogate its various elements and make adjustments as necessary. For example, in respect of the student experience piece, it had been highlighted that the Tyndall Place development might not address concerns raised in Humanities regarding physical space. Thinking in this area would be further developed and discussed with the Board in due course.
- 1.11 Turning to the external environment, the Vice-Chancellor reflected on the implications of Brexit. The Board noted that unhelpful rhetoric was emerging from Government in respect of international students and immigration. The University, for now, would continue to emphasise that international staff and students were welcome at, and valued by, Bristol. The sector appeared to already be seeing a flight to quality, which was reassuring for Bristol but could not lead to complacency by the University. The recent Mayor's lecture had highlighted the international outlook of the city, and the University would seek to reinforce those messages.
- 1.12 The Chair thanked the Vice-Chancellor for a full and frank update, and reflected on the impressive changes already being implemented (particularly in respect of the student experience) by the University. The Board particularly noted the challenges of turning the University's Strategy from a document into a reality, and the important role of the Board in providing Strategic oversight whilst not becoming 'bogged down' in operational detail.

2. Apologies

- 2.1 NOTED.

3. Strategy Implementation: Education and Students*

3.1 RECEIVED and NOTED (presentation) and Papers **BT/16-17/001**, **BT/16-17/002**, **BT/16-17/003**, **BT/16-17/004** and **BT/16-17/005**).

3.2 The Chair reminded the Board that each of its meetings in 2016/17 would be ‘themed’ in accordance with the key themes of the University Strategy. This meeting had been allocated the theme of “Education and Students”, and the morning’s presentations were intended to allow members a ‘deeper dive’ into the priority actions, challenges and opportunities within that theme. The intention was that members would receive updates about progress of priority actions, and have the opportunity to provide genuine strategic input as appropriate, but it was not expected that members would enter into detailed interrogation of the University’s operational plans.

3.3 The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education and Students) and the Deputy Registrar presented to the Board.

Student Surveys

3.4 The presentation highlighted the following points:

- Whilst the University was heartened by the increase in overall student satisfaction, as expressed in the 2016 National Student Survey (NSS) Results, three priority action areas had been identified: (1) feedback; (2) personal development/employability; and (3) learning community/cohort identity.
- The University would continue with its strategy of allocating Schools/Departments and relevant Professional Services Divisions to a tier of monitoring, as this had already yielded improvements.
- The University was proud of the increased satisfaction with the Students’ Union as expressed by students in the 2016 NSS, which represented a good deal of hard work across the institutions.
- Within the NSS, student feedback in response the question “Feedback on my work has helped me clarify things I did not understand” indicated that this was a very real issue for the University to address. The issue was particularly pertinent in the context of the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF).
- The ‘good news’ stories gathered from Schools, Departments and Professional Services would be shared with staff and students to drive performance and to promote student understanding of the work being undertaken by the University.

3.5 Members of the Board provided the following comments and observations:

- It would be important to ensure a balance in respect of the ‘good news’ stories: care should be taken that these not descend into ‘spin’. That said, where Schools, Departments and Professional Services were high-performing, it would be important to celebrate that and prevent any sense that transformational improvements were unachievable.
- It was hoped that the Student Lifecycle Support Programme (SLSP) would help with certain of the issues being experienced by the University in respect of assessment and feedback. However, it would be important for the University to continue to hold detailed discussions with Schools where specific issues/areas for improvement were identified.

Bristol Scholars

3.6 The presentation gave an overview of the key features of the *Bristol Scholars* initiative and reminded the Board of the key facets of the University’s Widening Participation activities. In particular, the Board noted:

- The University’s commitment to Widening Participation (and equality and diversity more broadly) permeated the Strategy. As well as its own targets in respect of social inclusion and diversity, the University saw the itself as a key contributor to equality of

opportunity within the city of Bristol, as part of its broader civic mission. The Board was reminded that the city of Bristol was hugely disparate in terms of academic achievement.

- A key workstream was attracting applications from students with Widening Participation backgrounds. Student Affairs Committee would be considering this issue in depth in due course. The University already had a reputation for academically focused interventions with a track record of success, which should pay dividends in this context.
- There was much to be heartened by, as the University had had considerable success in respect of Widening Participation (though it could by no means become complacent). The Board was particularly encouraged to note that 68% of the University's students now met one or more Widening Participation indicator.
- Due to the highly innovative nature of the *Bristol Scholars* scheme, there was very little existing research into such schemes. The University was therefore commissioning research from its own academics in respect of the scheme's impact.

3.7 Members of the Board provided the following comments and observations:

- It was noted that *Bristol Scholars* would be open to students from both state and independent schools, which was of some surprise. In discussion, the Board noted that the dichotomy between 'state' and 'independent' schools was no longer as clear as it had once been. Further, as independent schools worked towards greater social inclusion, some students at independent schools were likely to have one or more Widening Participation indicator and it would be counter-intuitive to effectively exclude such students from the scheme.
- The synergies between *Bristol Scholars* and the University's two-grade contextual offers were noted.
- There was significant scope for alumni to engage with these initiatives, and to support the delivery of the University's ambitions in respect of Widening Participation. For example, by way of an alumni mentoring scheme/network for students from Widening Participation backgrounds.
- The Board particularly wished to note the contributions made by Mr James Wetz, working with the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education and Students), in respect of Widening Participation.
- The Board was pleased to note the progress that had been made in respect to University scholarships for refugees.
- It would be important to recognise that the University had a responsibility to ensure that students coming to it through the *Bristol Scholars* scheme could succeed and flourish at the University. The Board perceived that there were risks associated with the scheme in that regard, but felt that the University was putting in place sufficient support to mitigate that risk.

Bristol Futures

3.8 The presentation highlighted the key features of the *Bristol Futures* initiative and other ways in which the University would seek to ensure that its students acquire the knowledge, skills and understanding valued by employers. In particular, the Board noted that:

- The Tyndall Place initiative was conceived more broadly than being just a capital project, and the student experience elements were being emphasised across the University. The programme benefits were currently being encapsulated, so that the University could be clear of its objectives from the start.
- There were many factors behind the University's desire to develop well-rounded graduates, but one key such factor was the increasing importance of the Destination of Leavers of Higher Education (DELHE) data in university league tables and the TEF.

- The University did not have a tradition of institution-wide educational enhancement projects, and so international communications (as well as the Change Readiness Assessments that had been conducted) would be hugely important. Challenges in implementation were being shared across the University, to emphasise co-creation and encourage buy-in for the changes being introduced. Students were also engaged – notably in co-creation of their curricula.

3.9 Members of the Board provided the following comments and observations:

- It would be important to ensure an adequate IT infrastructure to support the University's ambitions. The University's consideration of flexible and inclusive learning, particularly in this context was welcomed.
- There was a clear role for alumni to play in supporting the delivery of the University's priorities and actions in this area.
- It would be important for these initiatives to be appropriately resourced, in light of the scale of the University's endeavours. The Board noted that certain of the actions within this Strategic theme were deliverable within the University's current education workstreams or through the Tyndall Place programme.
- It would be helpful to define what 'success' would look like. The Board noted that, in its first year, a take-up rate of 15% would be considered a successful starting point from which to further develop.

Bristol Institute for Learning and Teaching (BILT)

3.10 The presentation highlighted the aims and objectives of the BILT, as well as progress made to date in implementation. In particular, the Board noted that:

- There was much existing good practice across the University, but the institution-wide promotion of pedagogical enhancement had perhaps not been as high a priority as it could be. The BILT would therefore advance the use of production of research and scholarship in order to provide evidence-informed curricula for students in a very meaningful and explicit way.
- The BILT would also support colleagues in their learning from one another. Teaching/learning innovation had tended to be quite discipline-focused to date, and the BILT would help to overcome silos where they existed.
- Grants and fellowships were being enhanced in order to bring them more in line with research fellowships.

3.11 Members of the Board welcomed the forward-looking and pro-active approach being taken in respect of pedagogical enhancement, embodied by the BILT. In the ensuing discussion, the Board noted the profound impact that students' perception of the University's provision of teaching and learning would have on its ranking in the TEF. The Board was reminded of the key features of TEF and advised as to the initial modelling that had been conducted regarding the University's likely performance in it. The Board noted, in particular, that the University would need to decide whether to participate in the (voluntary) 'trial year' for TEF before the end of January 2018.

Student Support

3.12 The Chair welcomed Mr Mark Ames, Director of Student Services, and Dr Rachel Lart, Senior Teaching Fellow and Chair of the Senior Tutors Network, to the meeting. The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education and Students) reminded members of the Board that the University was committed to reviewing and enhancing the ways in which it provided student pastoral support. At present, support was provided to students across the University from a huge array of sources, which might be both a strength and a weakness. A dispersed model might well continue to be appropriate, but its effectiveness would need to be evidenced. A draft paper had been prepared (paper ref. **BT/16-17/005**) setting out questions and issues for consultation with colleagues,

with a view to addressing this. The document so far had been shaped by discussions with staff from the Academic and Professional Services spheres, as well as with the Students' Union.

3.13 Mr Ames and Dr Lart highlighted the following points:

- Although a complicated set of challenges were at play, these were shared across the sector. Universities UK, for example, had recently set up a student wellbeing working group.
- The University was moving towards a whole institution approach to student wellbeing, rather than relying on discrete interventions by specialist services. A key challenge was therefore to reshape the University's collective thinking about student wellbeing and its support for students' ability to perform well at the University. Whilst a challenge, this did also present opportunities.
- The University had already been successful in developing an institution-wide approach to student employability (for example, in employability partnerships between Careers and each School), which could translate to the student support conundrum.
- A genuine relationship between Personal Tutors and students was really important, and those relationships were emerging more deeply across the institution. The Senior Tutor Network had been vitally important to this development.
- The reality of student support 'on the ground' was very complex, and the precise role of Personal Tutors within that was not always clear. The real crux of the role was to get to know students as an academic, and to focus on students' academic development, but many Personal Tutors perceived their role as also needing to provide personal/welfare advice to students. Finding the boundaries around what constituted academic advice was very important, and the 'grey areas' between (1) academic and personal advice and (2) Personal Tutors and specialist support services were what caused the greatest anxieties for staff and students.

3.14 Members of the Board provided the following comments and feedback:

- It would be critical to understand exactly how Personal Tutoring worked in each School. Whilst some divergence of practice across Schools (and across Personal Tutors) could be expected, consistency was felt to be important to students. More clarity as to the role of Personal Tutor could also help – perhaps some boundaries could be introduced as part of the Personal Tutor role description.
- The consultation paper submitted to the Board did not appear to have been shaped for consulting students. In particular, questions for students to consider should be more discrete/succinct. Input from students as part of the consultation/review would be absolutely essential to its success. The student members of the Board would be pleased to provide further input.
- This was potentially a very difficult, and different, consultation. Care should therefore be taken to ask open, in-depth questions.
- In terms of consultation participants, staff who were naturally confident and outspoken would no doubt willingly participate. It would be important to speak to those members of staff who wouldn't naturally come forward, or respond to consultation, in order to ensure a penetrating view of student support.
- The term "Personal Tutor" did rather imply some level of personal support. If this role is to focus on academic support, the University should consider nomenclature.
- Resilience to student growth should be factored into the University's budgeting process, and not just for funding for Student Services.
- There was a range of services providing advice and support outside of the University, which the University could perhaps better leverage. This should be considered.
- It was felt that Student Services were generally excellent in terms of service provision, but that problems were largely of scale.

- There were significant numbers of students who arrived at the University with pre-existing profound needs.
 - It would be helpful to see a strand of learning from other institutions as part of this consultation.
 - It wasn't entirely clear how this consultation would knit together with the review of support in halls of residence. From a student perspective, support provision should be seamless and therefore there should be a clear articulation between the two reviews.
- 3.15 The Chair reflected on the University's bold ambitions in this area, and noted that the Board would appreciate further updates as the thinking on this issue developed. The Chair concluded by thanking the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education and Students), the Deputy Registrar, Mr Ames and Dr Lart for their gargantuan efforts in this area.
- 4. Annual Report: Prevent**
- 4.1 RECEIVED and NOTED (reference **BT/16-17/006**).
- 4.2 The Deputy Registrar reported on the requirements of HEFCE in respect of Prevent. The University continued to consult with the Students' Union regarding the implementation of the Prevent duty.
- 4.3 The Student Members of the Board reminded the Board of the political stance of the Student Union's Sabbatical Officers in respect of Prevent. Whilst the requirements of Government did not appear likely to lessen, the University would continue to seek to implement the Prevent duty in a way that was respectful of its educational and academic mission.
- 4.4 In response to questions from members of the Board, it was reported that there was little data thus far, in respect of the numbers of students referred to external agencies through Prevent at other institutions although there had been no such referrals at Bristol.
- 4.5 The Director of Student Services, and his team, were thanked for hard work in this area.
- 5. Key Note Speaker: Nicola Dandridge, Universities UK***
- 5.1 RECEIVED and NOTED (presentation, on file).
- 5.2 The Chair of the Board welcomed Ms Dandridge to the meeting, noting her considerable skills and experience. An invitation had been extended to Ms Dandridge in order to provide members of the Board with a greater understanding of the Higher Education sector. This was in response to feedback received as part of the annual skills audit, as well as discussions that had emerged in the context of implementation of the recommendations of the 2014 Council Effectiveness Review.
- 5.3 Ms Dandridge presented to the Board regarding challenges and opportunities within the Higher Education sector.
- 6. Declaration of interests**
- 6.1 Members were reminded that they had an obligation to disclose any pecuniary, family or other personal interest that they had in any matter under discussion at any meeting of the Board of Trustees as soon as practicable. Members were reminded of their fiduciary duty to avoid conflicts of interest.

6.2 As for previous meetings of the Board of Trustees, staff members disclosed their ongoing interest in matters related to the Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS), as members of the scheme. The Chief Financial Officer disclosed an ongoing interest as a Trustee of the University of Bristol Pensions and Assurance Scheme (UBPAS).

7. Minutes of meetings on 1 July 2016

7.1 CONFIRMED, subject to minor amendments.

8. Matters arising and actions

8.1 There was nothing outstanding to report that was not otherwise being addressed at the meeting.

9. Chair's report*

9.1 RECEIVED and NOTED (reference **BT/16-17/007**).

9.2 The Board was reminded that there would be a development day on 16 March 2017 (precise format and content to be determined), with a dinner that evening. Members of the Board were requested to hold this in their diaries.

9.3 The Board of Trustees APPROVED the appointment of Julie Goldstein to the Audit Committee, with immediate effect, for an initial term of three years.

9.4 The Board NOTED that a number of appointments that had been taken by MAGG over the summer:

- Sir Ron Kerr to the Finance Committee
- Dr Moira Hamlin to the Honorary Degrees Committee
- Mr Jamie Cross and Ms Laura Ho to the Student Affairs Committee
- Mr Stephen Le Fanu to the Estates Committee
- Ms Hannah Dualeh to the Honorary Degrees Committee
- Ms Laura Ho to the IT Committee.

The appointments had been approved electronically between meetings, in order to allow members to attend autumn meetings of their respective committees.

10. Vice-Chancellor's report*

10.1 RECEIVED and NOTED (reference **BT/16-17/008**).

Admissions and Student Recruitment

10.2 The Registrar provided an oral update of the current position regarding student admissions and recruitment, and reflected on the recent announcements about student visas made by Government. The Board noted the relative stability of the University's position, as well as the positive developments from this point in the previous year, and congratulated all those involved.

10.3 In respect of the recent news that the Government intended to increase the number of 'homegrown' doctors, the Registrar reported that modelling suggested that the University would be able to increase its intake of medical students without sacrificing quality of students.

10.4 In response to questions from members of the Board, it was noted that some students were having to share rooms. It was hoped that the situation would not last more than another few weeks.

Research and Enterprise

10.5 **[REDACTED: likely to prejudice commercial interests]**.

10.6 The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research and Enterprise) commented on the recent grants and awards that had been highlighted in the Vice-Chancellor's written report. The Board noted in particular the strategic importance of the award by the National Institute for Health Research for a Biomedical Research Centre. Whilst smaller in monetary terms, studentship awards from the Wellcome Trust and the British Heart Foundation were similarly of strategic significance as they would not only support the University in growing its PGR numbers but also acting as a gateway through which the University could apply for further funding in future. The Board congratulated the Pro Vice-Chancellors (Research and Enterprise), as well as the broader research community, for their work in this area.

Sectoral Developments

10.7 The Vice-Chancellor reflected again on the impact of Brexit, noting that the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Strategy) had been monitoring trends and news in this regard. At present, there was not much change 'on the ground', although there were worrying signs ahead in light of recent announcements regarding immigration. The University was also monitoring developments with respect to visa assurance in light of the fact that the Higher Education Assurance Team (HEAT) would be drawn back within the Home Office. On a more positive note, the University had been pleased to hear the Treasury's guarantee of funding for awards made by the European commission, even when projects continue post-Brexit, to 2020.

ERP

10.8 The Vice-Chancellor reminded members of the Board of the background to the Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) project, **[REDACTED: likely to prejudice commercial interests]**

10.9 **[REDACTED: likely to prejudice commercial interests]**

10.10 **[REDACTED: likely to prejudice commercial interests]**

10.11 **[REDACTED: likely to prejudice commercial interests]**

10.12 **[REDACTED: likely to prejudice commercial interests]**

10.13 The Chair of the IT Committee provided detailed commentary for the benefit of the Board as a whole:

- **[REDACTED: likely to prejudice commercial interests]**

10.14 The Chair of the IT Committee was thanked for a clear and comprehensive summary. **[REDACTED: likely to prejudice commercial interests]**

10.15 The Chair of the Audit Committee reminded the Board of its collective responsibility for the University's assets **[REDACTED: likely to prejudice commercial interests]**

SLSP

10.16 The Vice-Chancellor reflected on the importance of the Student Lifecycle Support Programme (SLSP) to the various education and student matters flagged earlier in the meeting **[REDACTED: likely to prejudice commercial interests]**

10.17 The Board recorded its thanks to the Programme Director and Programme Manager, Paula Coonerty and Sylvia Franke, for their hard work **[REDACTED: likely to prejudice commercial interests]** Thanks were also given to the Registrar, Deputy Registrar and Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education and Students). **[REDACTED: likely to prejudice commercial interests]**

11. Financial Matters*

11.1 RECEIVED and NOTED (reference **BT/16-17/009**).

11.2 The Chief Financial Officer reminded the Board that it would be signing off the annual report and accounts at its next meeting. In the meantime, the Board was being asked to note the University's financial performance for the year ended 31 July 2016. **[REDACTED: likely to prejudice commercial interests]**

11.3 The Board applauded the financial results, **[REDACTED: likely to prejudice commercial interests]**

11.4 The Chief Financial Officer reflected on the financing of the Strategy's capital plan, particularly in light of the changes to the funding environment. The Finance Committee would be considering this issue in some detail over the autumn, and a number of options were being explored **[REDACTED: likely to prejudice commercial interests]**

11.5 In response to questions from members of the Board, it was confirmed that risk in respect of the University's current arrangements was being thoroughly considered. **[REDACTED: likely to prejudice commercial interests]**

11.6 **[REDACTED: likely to prejudice commercial interests]**

11.7 In respect of USS, **[REDACTED: likely to prejudice commercial interests]** The Chief Financial Officer was developing a Pensions Strategy: it was anticipated that this would be considered by HR Committee and Finance Committee over the autumn, with a view to the Board considering the issue in early 2017.

12. SAC*

12.1 The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education and Students) advised the Board that the Student Affairs Committee (SAC) aimed to provide the Board with insights and a deeper understanding of student and education issues. This year, it would theme its meeting to consider key elements of the student experience (as articulated in the Strategy) in a more in-depth way.

13. Audit Committee

13.1 RECEIVED and NOTED (reference **BT/16-17/010**).

14. AOB

14.1 The Board of Trustees was pleased to receive a report of very positive engagement by staff in respect of recent recruitment to staff mediation.

15. Standing items

Equality and diversity implications

The Board reflected that a number of its discussions had equality and diversity implications, notably its detailed discussions regarding Widening Participation and the annual *Prevent* report. The Board considered that such matters had received due consideration at the meeting, and that the business submitted to it had received due scrutiny with respect to equality and diversity.

Communication and consultation

The Board noted that it had made a number of suggestions regarding communication and consultation, including communication with staff about the University's financial performance and the progress of ERP. The Board considered that business submitted to it had received due consideration prior to submission.

Date of next meeting

The next meeting of the Board of Trustees would be held on **Friday 11 November 2016**.