

MEETING OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

FRIDAY 5 JULY 2024

MINUTES

Present: Mr M Allan, Mr S Boyd, Mr J Boyer (Chair), Professor A Carr, Ms J Cecil, Mr L Coppi, Ms J Huggins, Mr N Keveth, Dr J Khawaja, Ms X Levantis, Mr F Quek, Mr S Robertson, Professor J Squires (Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Provost), Miss H Thornton [observer], Professor E Welch (Vice-Chancellor), Professor Dame M Welham [online until lunchtime].

In attendance: Professor Michele Acuto (Pro Vice-Chancellor, Global Engagement) – item 9B, Mr Michael Flay (Head of Governance), Ms Lucie Lambert (Governance Apprentice), Mr Barra Mac Ruairi (Chief Property Officer) – item 10, Mr Andrew Monk (Executive Director of Global Engagement) – item 9B, Ms Lucy Penrose (Deputy Head of Governance), Lucinda Parr (Chief Operating Officer, Registrar and University Secretary), Mr Matthew Costain (TQ Programme Director, Strategic Programmes and Projects) – Item 10, Mr Peter Vermeulen (Chief Financial Officer), Professor Kate Whittington (Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor, Education Quality and Standards) – Item 12 [online].

Apologies: Ms O Adesanya, Professor I Craddock, Professor N Edwards, Mr N Joicey, Ms G Bowen, Ms H Quinn (Chief of Staff).

1. WELCOMES, APOLOGIES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

1.1 The Chair welcomed the Board to the final meeting of the 2023/24 academic year.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

2.1 Mr L Coppi declared an interest for the SU budget item, in relation to his current involvement in SU business.

3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

3.1 The Board **APPROVED** the minutes of the 24th May 2024 meeting of the Board of Trustees as a true and accurate record (*on file*).

4. ACTIONS & MATTERS ARISING

- 4.1 RECEIVED and **NOTED:** the Board action register *(on file)*.
- 4.2 **NOTED**: that the CIO had now returned to work as part of a phased return.

5. CHAIR'S REPORT (ref BT/23-24/061) (on file)).

5.1 RECEIVED and NOTED: the Chair's Report.

6. EXECUTIVE GROUP REPORT AND QUESTIONS

- 6.1 RECEIVED and **CONSIDERED**: the report of the Executive (ref **BT/23-24/062**) (*on file*)).
- 6.2 The following was **NOTED**:

Election update

- 6.2.1 The Labour Party had made it clear that the regional authorities would remain the conduit for national infrastructure funding, potentially including QR Research funding.
- 6.2.2 The newly elected Labour MP and current WECA Maylor, Mr Dan Norris, had also made it clear that he had no intention of standing down as WECA Mayor legally he was able to be the MP and the Mayor until May 2025.
- 6.2.3 Three members of the Shadow Cabinet had been re-elected. Thangam Debonnaire (Labour) had lost her seat to the Green Party MP, Carla Denyer.
- 6.2.4 Issy Russell, SU Sabbatical officer, was now an elected Green Party Councillor in the city.
- 6.2.5 The current home UG tuition fee freeze was due to expire at the end of the next academic year. If the freeze was not renewed, then the fee cap would automatically rise from £9,275 to £9,450 and that would prevent a real terms funding cut for sector of around £260m. Fees may then rise with inflation after that.
- 6.2.6 There had been no mention in the Labour Party manifesto about student maintenance support. The manifesto had referenced shorter term funding cycles, as well as investment and growth in areas such as Aerospace, AI, Automotive, Defence, Energy and Life Sciences.
- 6.2.7 HE failure was on the worry list for the new government, but long term HE structural issues were not a major priority in the immediate short term.
- 6.2.8 The Board congratulated the new UK Government led by Sir Keir Starmer's Labour Party.

6.3 The following was **DISCUSSED**:

- 6.3.1 The implications of the general election on local politics, the role of the BCC and WECA going forward, and relationship management between all parties including the University. The Board emphasised the importance of local connections as well as national connections.
- 6.3.2 The recently refreshed WECA Strategy, which had not yet been formally agreed, and the views of local businesses and the local community in relation to this.
- 6.3.3 Continued support from BCC for both TQ and Isambard particularly in relation to how these would increase economic regeneration. It was noted that the energy supply for Isambard was primarily electric through renewables.
- 6.3.4 The importance of ensuring strong communications and formal relationships with BCC, working together with them and UWE on the Local Plan. This was especially important in relation to student numbers and student accommodation requirements. It was noted that the Local Plan was to be a matter of public scrutiny through a legal process in the Autumn of 2024.
- 6.3.5 The work that the Vice-Chancellor and members of the Executive were doing in terms of building local neighbourhood relationships across the City (Clifton, Bedminster and South Bristol) and the importance of having different messages for different types of stakeholders. It was noted that Bristol communities were always very keen to be engaged and informed and to be part of decision-making. It was **AGREED** that at a future Board meeting, the Vice-Chancellor would deliver a session on the University's community engagement work.

ACTION: Head of Governance

6.4 The following was **NOTED**:

People matters

- 6.4.1 The Vice-Chancellor had been elected on to the Board of UCEA.
- 6.4.2 The University had put forward a 2.5% pay offer as a final offer to the Unions on 4th July UNISON and UNITE were positive about the pay offer, but UCU was currently in dispute with its own staff who were now on strike, so the University had not yet received a formal response from them.
- 6.4.3 **REDACTED:** Section 22: Information Intended For Future Publication

- 6.4.4 University Senate had recently approved an organisational Sexual Misconduct Policy, which had been developed in consultation with the Students Union. This policy was a requirement of the Office for Students (OfS).
- 6.4.5 The University was now coming to the end of the setting up phase of Reparative Futures it had appointed accountability partners who were engaging with the University and providing useful feedback from communities. The Executive looked forward to working with them more into the future. The University had also brought in an external partner, who had undertaken an initial fact finding about the University's EDI work in terms of racial equality within the EDI team but also the broader senior leadership approach. The Executive and the Anti Racism Steering Group would receive feedback from the external partner next week which would then be reported to the Board via the EEDI Oversight Committee which would consider the feedback at its next meeting.

6.5 The following was **DISCUSSED**:

ACTION: Chair EEDI Committee

- 6.5.1 The encampments and Open Day protests, key implications, and the lessons learned.
- 6.5.2 The student view of the rather acute and sudden shift to a high security presence on campus and the impact of this on student perception and the overall campus environment. Student trustees suggested some refreshed communications at the start of the 2024/25 academic year to remind students about the Behaviour Policy but also to positively frame how students can be an active member of the university community.
- 6.5.3 Advance intelligence gathering in relation to the types of national and international groups who might be involved in the protests/encampments given that some of the participants involved were clearly not UoB students.
- 6.5.4 The importance of continued planned internal and external communications around the protests and encampments, and particularly in relation to media coverage.
- 6.5.5 The Board was reminded that there would be a communications and brand refresh session at a pre-scheduled Board meeting in 2024/25.
- 6.5.6 The implementation of the Sexual Misconduct Policy and associated training regarding sexual consent and the fact that all University policies were reviewed regularly as part of business as usual. Communications would go out to all students to make them aware of the work that was continuing to be delivered as part of the Policy, and in partnership with the Students Union.
- 6.5.7 It was **AGREED** that the Board should receive a review of how the Structure of the Academic Year programme had gone this should be added to the Board Forward Plan for 2024/25.

ACTION: Head of Governance

Michele Acuto and Andrew Monk joined the meeting

- 6.6 **RECEIVED** and **CONSIDERED**: a PowerPoint presentation on the "Latest admissions update and financial impact" (*on file*) delivered by the Chief Financial Officer, Chief Operating Officer, and the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Provost.
- 6.7 The following was **NOTED**:
- 6.7.1 **REDACTED:** Section 43: Commercial Interests
- 6.7.2 The data was not directly comparable to prior years, as deposit deadlines were extended for significantly more students, because of a sharp increase in applications for scholarships.
- 6.7.3 The University was actively responding to this data with a series of actions to increase revenue and had prepared several cost reduction options.
- 6.7.4 Following detailed modelling and discussions with Faculties the Executive were now focussing on Scenario O8 as this required early actions to mitigate its impact.

REDACTED: Section 43: Commercial Interests

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- 6.7.5 There were detailed revenue and cost mitigations being put in place.
- 6.8 The following was **DISCUSSED**:
- 6.8.1 Making use of quantitative and qualitative analysis of the University's communications approach and the importance of looking at behaviour patterns.
- 6.8.2 How to boost conversions using PTES (the Postgraduate education student survey) feedback.
- 6.8.3 Progress in relation to additional offers and early clearing preparations.
- 6.8.4 How the University was ensuring that its agents were clearing consistently with the University's standards. It was noted that the University only worked with agents which it had identified, vetted and appointed directly no third parties. The University was very disciplined about its agents and could demonstrate that it had the internal resources to genuinely manage them.
- 6.8.5 The importance of QS rankings in relation to quality of intake and balancing quality and strategy with trying to achieve immediate financial targets.
- 6.8.6 The ongoing Size and Shape review, and as the recruitment challenge became more acute, the importance of continuing to review the rigorousness of that exercise.
- 6.8.7 The Cubane data analysis which was leading towards a fundamental shift in how the University was thinking about the delivery of its services.

6.8.8	REDACTED: Section 43: Commercial Interests	

ACTION: Chief Financial Officer/DVC & Provost

- 6.8.9 The importance of having a strong communications and engagement strategy alongside this work so that staff could understand why some of the decisions were being made, and the impact of those decisions if the changes were not made.
- 6.8.10 The importance of mitigating the impact on students, and the commitment that the University had already made to resourcing the programmes where it had taken on additional students.
- 6.9 The Board confirmed that it had a good understanding of the immediate actions that were being proposed and that trustees supported the Executive in taking forward those actions.

Rob Logan joined the meeting

7. FINANCE REPORT

- 7.1 RECEIVED and **CONSIDERED**: the CFO finance report, paper ref **BT/23-24/063** (*on file*)).
- 7.2 **NOTED**: the summary of the most important financial matters as of June 2024.
- 7.3 **NOTED**: that there would be a deep dive on working capital at a Finance and Investment Committee meeting in the coming months.
- 7.4 **APPROVED**: the Student Union block grant for 24/25 to 26/27.
- 7.5 **APPROVED**: the three-year mechanism/settlement as highlighted in the report which has been agreed between the University and the Union.

National Procurement Act 2023

- 7.5 In relation to the National Procurement Act 2023 proposal contained within the paper, the Board **CONSIDERED** the following:
- 7.5.1 Whether the University was within the terms of the Act to not comply with the Act from 28th October 2024.
- 7.5.2 What was the risks associated with not complying with the Act.
- 7.5.3 Who could potentially externally challenge the University's decision and what would be the impact of a successful challenge.

- 7.5.4 What risk was the University carrying if it took the decision to not comply.
- 7.5.5 What was the legal advice that the University had received.
- 7.6 The following was **NOTED** as part of the considerations:
- 7.6.1 There had been no challenge anywhere else since 2000, and the University had a fallback position were there to be a challenge.
- 7.6.2 The University would be able to treat a large amount of funding from the government differently and also had a fallback position for this.
- 7.6.3 The commercial flexibility that the proposal would bring was significant.
- 7.7 **APPROVED:** the recommendation from the Chief Financial Officer (endorsed by the Audit and Risk Committee and University Executive Board) that the University determines that it does not need to comply with the national Procurement Act 2023 from 28th October 2024.

Rob Logan left the meeting

8. RISK APPETITE STATEMENT (ref BT/23-24/064) (on file).

8.1 This item was deferred to the September 2024 meeting of the Board.

9a. KEY UNIVERSITY RISK REGISTER

- 9.1 RECEIVED and **NOTED**: the Key University risk register (paper ref **BT/23-24/065a**) (*on file*)).
- 9.2 **NOTED**: the University's risk profile.
- 9.3 **NOTED**: the controls in place to manage the Key University Risks.
- 9.4 **NOTED**: the introduction of 2H Trusted research risk since the previous update
- 9.5 Trustees were invited to send any comments on the risk register to the University Secretary outside of today's meeting.

9b. DEEP DIVE RISK: INTERNATIONAL MARKET DIVERSIFICATION

- 9.6 RECEIVED and **CONSIDERED**: a PowerPoint presentation and paper on international market diversification (paper ref **BT/23-24/065b**) (*on file*)).
- 9.7 The Pro Vice-Chancellor Global Engagement and the Executive Director of Global Engagement presented to the Board a review of international market diversification and trans-national education options at the University of Bristol.

9.8 The following was **DISCUSSED**:



9.8.7 The reputation driven approach and the opportunity that the University now had to refresh its strategic marketing and brand and bring these pieces of work together to focus on reputation.

9.8.8 Size and shape: the University must keep an eye out for the reputational implications and results of reshape on how it could project its overall identity.



9.9 **NOTED** that there would be future discussions on this topic at the Board meetings and the challenge for the Executive was to create a differentiation in the global market where the University's competition was the global top tier universities whether at institutional or disciplinary level. A draft Global Engagement vision or Statement would be prepared for Board feedback.

Michele Acuto and Andrew Monk left the meeting Barra MacRuari and Matthew Costain joined the meeting

10. TQEC UPDATE

- 10.1 RECEIVED and **NOTED**: an update on the Temple Quarter Enterprise Campus Programme (paper ref **BT/23-24/066**) (*on file*)).
- 10.2 **NOTED**: Summary of decisions arising from the UEB TQ workshop "Planning for Key Challenges" (9 April 24)
- 10.3 **NOTED**: that this TQ Programme Update was shared with the University Executive Board at its meeting on 18 June 2024.

10.4 The following was **DISCUSSED**:

- 10.4.1 **REDACTED:** Section 43: Commercial Interests
- 10.4.2 **REDACTED:** Section 43: Commercial Interests
- 10.4.3 The progress that was being made in relation to what was going on around the TQ campus and how those changes were being made at pace. It was noted that there had been significant engagement with communities.
- 10.4.4 The relationship between TQ and Isambard AI and the framework for synergies between them. Both represented different parts of the University's research ecosystem and there were ways in which they strengthened each other.

REDACTED: Section 43: Commercial Interests

10.4.5 Engagement with local communities, what their biggest concerns were (growth in student numbers and impact on accommodation and access to health care etc) and how the University was responding where it could with a continual process of engagement.

REDACTED: Section 43: Commercial Interests

- 10.4.6 The campus footprint (which was discussed at the recent Infrastructure Planning Committee meeting) and the opportunities that TQ presented to think about the impact for staff and students in terms of having a split campus.
- 10.4.7 Trying not to create barriers between the two campuses and the work underway in this regard.

REDACTED: Section 43: Commercial Interests

10.4.8 Space utilisation approach **REDACTED:** Section 43: Commercial Interests It was noted that the move to TQ represented a big cultural change for academic staff and a Change Manager was dedicated to ensuring a smooth transition.

Barra MacRuari and Matthew Costain left the meeting

11. UNIVERSITY SECRETARY'S REPORT

- 11.1 RECEIVED and **APPROVED**: a report from the University Secretary (paper ref **BT/23-24/067**) (*on file*)).
- 11.2 **NOTED:** the interim appointments made to the positions of General Counsel and Deputy University Secretary.
- 11.3 APPROVED: the proposed amendments to Ordinance 4 in respect of Board Committees, specifically the Terms of Reference for: i) The Audit and Risk Committee; ii) The Finance and Investment Committee, previously named Finance and Infrastructure Committee and; iii) The Infrastructure Planning Committee.
- 11.4 **APPROVED**: the changes required to the Board of Trustees schedule of delegation in light of the creation of the new Infrastructure Planning Committee, together with other minor amendments.

Kate Whittington joined the meeting

12. ANNUAL REPORT ON QUALITY & STANDARDS

- 12.1 RECEIVED and **APPROVED**: the Annual Report on Quality & Standards which had been deferred since the May meeting (paper ref **BT/23-24/055**) (*on file*)).
- 12.2 The following was **NOTED**:
- 12.2.1 The Teaching excellence framework outcome which was Silver overall. This highlighted many educational strengths at Bristol and the process had assisted the University in identifying areas of focus as preparations were underway for the next TEF in 2027.
- 12.2.2 The 22/23 academic year had been affected by significant levels of industrial action and as a result the University had to put in place emergency regulations to enable it to progress and award where possible, however academic standards were not compromised as a result.
- 12.2.3 Degree Outcome in 22/23 showed a reduction in the University's highest classifications for both UG and PGT degrees, so the institution had comfortably met the University's UK commitment to returning awards to pre-pandemic levels. However, the University was awaiting effective data to allow it to evaluate whether the reduction was in line with the sector picture or specific to UoB. As suggested by the Board last year, the data had been disaggregated further in terms of ethnicity which had shown some significant award gaps in relation to black students and award of first degrees it was important to highlight this wasn't a new gap, but to do with the more granular detail which was

now highlighting those gaps. University Education Committee was doing further analysis and was leading the discussion around what was needed to address those award gaps.

12.3 It was **AGREED** that once the analysis was available from the data futures data, the Executive would share this with the Board and highlight whether the University was out of alignment with the wider sector.

ACTION: DVC & Provost

12.4 There was a discussion about making use of the Bristol Live Unit Evaluation (Blue) as a lead indicator towards the NSS and it was agreed that it would be interesting to undertake some student focus groups to help us understand some of the correlations.



12.7 **APPROVED**: the University's Annual Report on Quality Assurance for academic year 2022/23.

Kate Whittington left the meeting

13 STUDENT MATTERS

13.1 RECEIVED and **APPROVED**: a series of papers relating to student matters, presented by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor & Provost (paper ref **BT/23-24/068**) (*on file*)).

Degree Outcomes Statement

- 13.2 The following was **NOTED**:
- 13.2.1 Producing and publishing a statement of undergraduate degree outcomes was a requirement of the UK Standing Committee for Quality Assessment (UKSCQA). The statement had been drafted in accordance with the UKSCQA guidelines and had been scrutinised and endorsed by University Academic Quality and Standards Committee, University Education Committee and Senate. Following feedback from the Board in 2023, changes had been made to the statement to include a greater level of granularity with respect to ethnicity award gaps. The other changes for 2024 were to incorporate the most recent year's data and to make necessary revisions to the accompanying text.
- 13.2.2 The 2024 statement showed that the University's degree outcomes had returned to pre-pandemic levels (thereby meeting the commitment made by Universities UK in July 2022). The proportion of Firsts and Good Honours in 2022/23 was aligned with rates last seen in 2015/16.
- 13.3 **APPROVED**: the University Degree Outcomes Statement 2024.

Student Agreement for 2024/25

- 13.4 **APPROVED**: the University's Student Agreement for 2024/25 which included the following:
 - Addition of an expectation of English language abilities;
 - Addition of an expectation to engage with attendance monitoring systems and processes this was previously a separate policy.
 - Addition of an expectation to engage with relevant academic integrity training.
 - Update to terminology regarding Board of Examiners.
- 13.5 **NOTED**: that all links to other policies, regulations, processes etc would be checked and updated (where necessary) before the final Student Agreement was published.

Student Protection Plan 2024/25

- 13.6 The following was **NOTED**:
- 13.6.1 Providing a Plan was a condition of registration with the Office for Students (OfS).
- 13.6.2 The Plan had been scrutinised and endorsed by both the Applicant and Student Information Oversight Group and University Education Committee.
- 13.6.3 The content of the Plan remained unchanged for 2024/25 and only the document control information had been updated.
- 13.7 **APPROVED**: The University Student Protection Plan 2024/25.

Annual Report on Student Appeals and Complaints 2022/23

- 13.8 The following was **NOTED**:
- 13.8.1 The annual report provided analysis and data on student academic appeal and complaint matters from 1 November 2022 to 31 October 2023.
- 13.8.2 The recommendations in the report had been accepted by University Education Committee and discussions are underway regarding taking them forward.
- 13.9 One of the student trustees raised a concern specifically in relation to the recommendations at the end of the student appeals process (page 222 of the board pack). He was concerned that this a reduction of student avenues to appeal because the recommendations appeared to remove the ability for students to appeal in extreme circumstances. There was also a concern around one of the recommendations (12) in relation to expectation management. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor & Provost would raise this with the relevant team outside of today's meeting.

ACTION: DVC & Provost

13.10 **NOTED**: Appeals and Complaints Annual Report 2022-23.

14. REPORT FROM AUDIT & RISK

14.1 RECEIVED and **NOTED**: the report from the Chair of the Audit & Risk Committee (paper ref **BT/23-34/069**) (*on file*)).

15. REPORT FROM NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE

- 15.1 RECEIVED and **APPROVED**: recommendations highlighted in the Report of the Nominations Committee (paper ref **BT/23-34/070**) (*on file*)).
- 15.2 Lucie Lambert and Leonardo Coppi left the meeting room.
- 15.3 **APPROVED**: that Lucie Lambert be appointed to the Board of Trustees as an Independent Member for an initial term of 4 months and 1 year from 1 September 2024 to 31 December 2025.
- 15.4 **APPROVED**: that Leonardo Coppi incoming Student Trustee, be appointed to the Honorary Degrees Committee for a term of 1 year from 1 July 2024 to 30 June 2025.
- 15.5 Lucie Lambert and Leonardo Coppi returned to the meeting room and were congratulated on their appointments.
- 15.6 **NOTED**: that the Pro Vice-Chancellor for Research & Innovation (PVC RI) had been approved by the Board out of cycle. The new PVC RI would join the University on 1st October 2024 and an announcement would be made prior to the departure of Prof Phil Taylor, outgoing PVC RE. Internal arrangements had been put in place to cover the post between August and September. The Vice-Chancellor provided some more detailed feedback verbally to the Board on the field of candidates and the rationale behind the decision to appoint Professor Guy Poppy.

16. **REPORT FROM FINANCE & INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE**

16.1 RECEIVED and **APPROVED**: a report from the Chair of FIC (paper ref **BT/23-34/071**) (*on file*)).

Temple Island Purpose-Built Student Accommodation

- 16.2 **APPROVED:** on the recommendation of the Committee that, the deadline for responses to the tender be extended to September 2024 **NOTING** that at its meeting on 22 March, the Board had approved on the recommendation of FIC, the disposal of long leasehold interest in UoB land at Temple Island for development of Purpose-Built Student Accommodation (PBSA) by a private developer and operator or developer with an operating partner.
 - 16.3 It was **NOTED** that bidders had asked for an extension given the upheaval in the market as a result of the snap general election, and the University had decided that it would be appropriate to accept the request for a delay and have the process proceed in a more orderly manner.

Chair's action

16.4 **NOTED**: that on 21 May 2024, the Chair of the Committee using Chair's Action approved on behalf of the Committee, the full disposal of the entire property estate left to University of Bristol in the will of Neil O'Brien by the Executors of the estate.

17. REPORT FROM INFRASTRUCTURE PLANNING COMMITTEE

- 17.1 RECEIVED and **APPROVED**: a verbal report from the Chair of IPC.
 - 17.2 The IPC met on 4th July 2024 and was quorate.
 - 17.3 It was **NOTED**, in relation to the Strategic review of the Modern Programme, that the core network, cyber security and 24/7 monitoring were on track and not far off being delivered.

REDACTED: Section 43: Commercial Interests

17.4 It was **NOTED** that the committee discussed the Campus Footprint and how each of the campuses worked together and what they were for. The committee provided some feedback to the Executive around multi-campuses, the importance of culture and identify being consistent across all campuses, and the impact on staff and students moving between different locations,

REDACTED: Section 43: Commercial Interests

- 17.5 A copy of the Terms of Reference for the new IPC had been tabled at today's meeting.
- 17.6 **APPROVED**: the Terms of Reference and Membership document for the Infrastructure Planning Committee.

18. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- 18.1 The Board thanked the outgoing student trustee, Helena Thornton for her valuable contributions to the Board over the past year.
- 18.2 **NOTED**: that the Chairs of ARC and IPC were currently working with the Head of Governance to appoint some more 'Additional Members' to their committees to plug some skills gaps. Vacancy details would be shared with the wider Board imminently so that trustees could share with their networks.

MEETING CLOSED. DATE OF NEXT MEETING: 20 SEPTEMBER 2024