



BOARD OF GOVERNORS
Meeting 3/2019-20
01 April 2020, Microsoft Teams (Virtual)

Approved Minutes

Present

Mr Graham Raikes MBE (Chair)	Independent Governor	GR
Dr Sue Cooper	Academic Staff Governor	SC
Ms Claire Gibson	Independent Governor	CG
Mr Geoffery Gulzar	Student Governor	GG
Ms Victoria Holbrook	Independent Governor	VH
Prof Patricia Hind	Independent Governor	PH
Bishop Nick McKinnell	Independent Governor	NM
Mr John Searson	Independent Governor	JS
Prof Gary Shum	Independent Governor	GS
Mrs Emma van der Lugt	Independent Governor	EvdL
Prof Rob Warner	Vice-Chancellor	RW
Mrs Ruth Mounstephen	Independent Governor	RM
Mrs Kate Doodson	Independent Governor	KD

In Attendance

Mr Simon Arthurs	Finance Director	SA
Prof Michelle Jones	Deputy Vice-Chancellor	MJ
Rev'd Michelle Parkman	University Chaplain	MP
Mr Stephen Plant	University Secretary & Registrar	SP
Mrs Alex De Tisi	Executive Officer	ADT

Mrs Jackie Westerman Co-opted Governor JA

1. Apologies & declarations of conflicts of interest

1.1 Mr Alex Hawtin	Independent Governor	AH
1.2 Ms Jacynth Ivey	Independent Governor	JI
1.3 Mrs Lynn Tamsett-White	Professional Services Staff Governor	LTW
1.4 Mr Matt Evans	Independent Governor	ME
1.5 Prof Gina Radford	Independent Governor	GiR
1.6 No declarations of interest were received.		

2. Note the Matters Arising from the previous minutes

2.1 4.21 GR reported that the OfS Financial Return had been reviewed several times by GR, AH, RW and SA before its final submission to the OfS.

2.2 All other matters were marked as complete.

For Discussion

3. To receive a report from the Vice-Chancellor & SU President

3.1 The Vice-Chancellor began by paying tribute to the university staff responding to all the demands recently put upon them.

3.2 He reported that all academic staff had been asked to ensure that all teaching material was made available online ahead of the predicted lockdown and so were fully prepared for home working. The students were immensely cooperative in leaving the university campus as quickly as possible. We have 4 students left on campus classified as care leavers.

3.3 RW noted that we currently have a skeleton team of staff left working on campus who must remain there in order to keep the place safe and functioning.

3.4 It was reported that we currently have 30 NHS key workers living on site, but we are anticipating this to rise to over 100 within the next week. In order to keep them as safe as possible they require en suite or private bathroom access which currently we can provide. The hospital is organising the cleaning of the rooms and all public areas are being cleaned daily.

3.5 JB reported that it is likely that the NHS will start to ask us to use more facilities on campus. The on-site Critical Management team have been doing a fantastic job with the NHS workers coming on site and they were thanked for their immense efforts. Marjon is the priority accommodation for the NHS currently and the feedback from the hospital has been immensely appreciative.

3.6 JB noted that in addition to this, the university has been asked to provide more information to the Army as part of a Project Nightingale proposal. The Army along with other various consultants are currently trying to ascertain whether our site can be used as a step-down facility for recovering COVID-19 patients. This proposal would mainly make use of the Sports Centre facilities and could potentially hold around 170 patients. Equally however, we would need to potentially house up to 130 construction workers for up to two weeks whilst the work was completed. A decision is awaited at some point today from the Army. JB will notify the Board in due course. **ACTION: JB**

3.7 JS raised a question regarding the rooms where student possessions remain and whether the

onsite team can clear these. JB confirmed that currently there are around 90 rooms with student belongings still in, however he anticipates that if the site were to be commissioned under Project Nightingale students could well be given letters to allow them back on site to collect personal belongings. If we were unable to do this then the second option would involve the onsite team logging the items in each room and packing them up.

3.8 KD asked whether this project would provide some additional income in the interim. RW noted that the NHS key workers are currently paying the same room rate for accommodation as students would have during this time. Prices have yet to be confirmed about the Project Nightingale operation, but this may provide some income. RW noted that currently the projected loss of income which includes, loss of student accommodation rental, sports centre income and the loss of food sales will total around £1m.

3.9 VH asked whether the university had been given a projected timescale for the takeover of the Sports Centre and whether this would have a knock-on effect on our Autumn term therefore providing disruption to students even further. JB confirmed that there has been no exact date or timescale yet. However, if they anticipate the conversion to take two weeks, he would hope it would take a similar amount of time to return the building to us.

3.10 PH asked whether the room requirements for any on site construction workers would need to be the same as the NHS. JB confirmed that it is likely they would be slightly different to NHS key workers and that this information would be provided to us if the project were to go ahead.

3.11 There was a discussion regarding what provisions have been put in place to ensure students still successfully complete their studies. SP noted that the quality and academic teams have been working very successfully together to make changes to assessments and course delivery and adapt them accordingly to different programmes. A close record of these changes is being kept and will be ratified at Senate later this month to ensure auditing is correctly completed. This way we ensure we are still meeting the registration requirements of the OfS. VH noted that at some point it would be helpful in due course to have a paper from the Senior Management Team on ways in which we are still ensuring such registration requirements are being met. **ACTION: SP/IL**

- 3.12 SP also confirmed that a variety of statements have gone out to students ensuring that they are also aware of the Extenuating Circumstances process, and we have sent out a 'no detriment statement' meaning that student performance in Semester B will not impact overall marks for the year, providing they achieve the required credits. The student response to this has been very positive.
- 3.13 VH asked whether the Senior Management Team had any sense of how this assessment and teaching delivery had differential impacts on various student groups. SP noted that each individual cohort of students has been asked to engage directly with their programme and module leads to ensure that no group of students is being lumped with others where their circumstances are distinct. This process is very labour intensive for the teams, however, it ensures we are still offering a bespoke experience to our students.
- 3.14 KW added to this by noting that student ChatBack has been used in a very different way over the past few weeks, and rather than general university feedback it has been used for more specific concerns and fears students have about the COVID-19 status and continuing their studies. Equally, Student Support have received extra calls and contact from students who previously may not have used this service so positively, some students are finding the virtual access easier to engage with.
- 3.15 RW reported that the teams are all working very hard to ensure we are doing everything we can for staff and managers are now encouraging staff to take some leave over the Easter period. Quite a few members of staff have been all hours, often needing to respond to Prime Minister press conferences very rapidly and work on student and staff communications. Lucy Pengelly is additionally working on some online wellbeing support for staff and has finalised the list of staff who will need to be furloughed. PH asked how many staff are likely to be furloughed and MJ confirmed that currently the headcount of staff is 42 from the Sports Centre and Estates, however as the guidance becomes clearer this may adjust.
- 3.16 RW reported that UUK have released a confidential report this week which notes that they are currently seeking clarification from the Government as to the extent to which the furlough funding applies to universities. What seems to be clear is that sections of staff who

are cross funded by commercial and the university income, for example those in the sports centre, can indeed be furloughed straightforwardly with the Government picking up 80% of their salaries. For other academic and professional services staff, this remains a very grey area and it is unclear if the university is classed as public sector or not. If we are not public sector, we can furlough additional staff but if we are then we cannot. This is a moving target.

3.17 RW noted that it is right to say that universities are dealing with all of these issues at various speeds.

3.18 Some universities have sent out very officious communication to their students and we have sought to deal with ours in a compassionate and sensitive manner. The Board praised the staff for this, and the positive stories highlighted on social media by Marjon. Equally, RW noted that students are kindly being reminded that as we progress into the further stages of this crisis, no matter how pressured they might feel, this is a reciprocal relationship and staff are likely to be under more acute pressure at this time also.

3.19 There is a warmth and compassion from the Marjon staff which is exemplary.

3.20 RW reported that UUK are currently negotiating with Government as there are some universities that will require an immediate bailout to stay afloat. Equally, all universities will need a bailout for loss of accommodation income, and some financial support for all in 2020-21. In particular:

- Around 28 institutions are particularly exposed financially immediately, particularly where more than 10% of their income comes from accommodation revenue.
- Additionally, there are 10% of institutions facing an immediate 33% reduction in their cash reserves.
- UUK notes that the projected sector wide loss for 2020-21, assuming a 50% fall in income from international income and 15% in undergraduate applications, will result in a £3.1 million drop on average per institution.
- UUK have worked out that those universities with the highest proportion of BAME students and a high percentage of international students will suffer the most.

3.21 The message from UUK is that this all needs to be addressed urgently by Government.

RW has a call with UUK tomorrow.

- 3.22** Finally, RW briefed the Board on the current Studio School developments. He noted that the university has entered into a conversation with the Department for Education and have developed the proposal that was circulated to the Board this week. This could prove to be a significant strategic decision that will provide multiple benefits to schools within the region, providing educational and professional development at the university. The proposal suggests that our initiatives align with the Department for Education's priorities in the region, however they may come back to us regarding money being released from the leasehold. A working group may need to be set up with some of the Governors to discuss action going forward. **ACTION: ADT to ask new Governance Officer to review in due course**
- 3.23 GG gave a brief update from the Students' Union (SU). He noted that the key challenge facing the SU is keeping students connected with the university. He is currently planning on how some events will be held virtually and noted that the Sports Awards and Marjon Student Awards will be held online in May and June.
- 3.24 He also noted that he is currently exploring how he might bring a virtual May Ball in some form to the students at the end of term.
- 3.25 He is currently working with Sasha Morrissey to ensure they are still talking to students regularly and signposting them in the right direction for key support. Engagement is strong and feedback has been positive so far.
- 3.26 He additionally noted that he is in touch with all the programme leaders to look after any student issues and is working with Jenny Barnicoat in Student Support to ensure the Student Experience Council is still held virtually after Easter. The SU elections have recently been held with a new president and deputy elected. The Board have received this update.
- 3.27 The Board thanked Geoffery for his hard work.
- 3.28** Finally, it was agreed that a message should go out to all staff thanking them for their exemplary work and for going above and beyond to look after and support both each other and our students. **ACTION: ADT**

4. Report on Student Recruitment

- 4.1 KW gave a brief update on student recruitment. Considering the current situation, recruitment patterns have inevitably changed from the normal pattern, however currently the university still remains up on last year's applications and has a 5.33% increase on this exact time last year.
- 4.2 KW reported that the key task going forward for the marketing and recruitment team is to ensure that we don't see a large drop off in applications during this crisis.
- 4.3 In terms of areas of study, PGCE applications have seen a significant rise and Postgraduate courses are looking relatively strong. Clearly it is still very early in the year and things can still change. Sport, Health and Wellbeing are looking very strong also.
- 4.4 In terms of the context this, the 2020-1 entry year will have the lowest year of 18 years due to the demographic dip. This equates to around a 3% overall drop for all universities. The fact that we are still evidencing growth in light of this is very positive.
- 4.5 Before the Coronavirus pandemic hit, the interview days and applicant days went very well. The UCAS fairs were mostly cancelled but the team made it to the Bristol fair prior to the lockdown. There is still no clarification on whether these fairs might be postponed until the Autumn or cancelled entirely this year, however the focus now is to maintain normal applications and discouraging deferral to September 2021 where possible.
- 4.6 KD asked how Virtual Applicant Days might work. KW noted that there had been an Applicant Day booked in for 8th April and the team are currently working through how this will work virtually. The aim is to try and provide continuous information to prospective students rather than just one day events.
- 4.7 There was a brief discussion around the student cap being brought back in by Government, however this has not been confirmed. Essentially these discussions have been put on hold and defining the cap would also prove problematic in a rapidly changing market.
- 4.8 KW and RW confirmed that the Board will of course be briefed where there is any additional clarity on recruitment changes and any recruitment changes through to September. **ACTION:**
KW/RW

- 4.9 RW noted that we may find some 18 year olds are even more keen to attend University after the lockdown, however this is very unpredictable. Our aim is to seek to draw in applicants into the experience of the Marjon community before they arrive so that they get to feel that this is different, personal and a place of belonging.
- 4.10 To support this, the library team have developed a programme of pre-registration warm up activities over the summer. This will inevitably prove very helpful for students who haven't been attending school lessons since March, and for mature students returning to study after some time.

5. Consider Mid-Year Financial Review

- 5.1 SA reported that the initial mid-year review had just been completed before the COVID-19 crisis hit. This report has been shared with the Board. The pre-crisis report showed that there was around £193k in adverse spend which was mostly related to Chartwells and an increase in depreciation charges. Chartwells had a time delay between the old manager leaving and the new one starting and during this period it appeared that staff purchasing had not been monitored correctly. SA confirmed that he is now working with the new manager to rectify this and forecast a lower number at year end.
- 5.2 Prior to the crisis, the university had around £180k in residual savings to make and to year end this risk may have been £500k to save.
- 5.3 SA moved on to discuss the capital spend. He noted that the capital spend is £1.9m which has been tracked through F&R committee. The attached paper evidences how much money will be allocated to various projects, including contingency planning. Overall this meant that in terms of cash flow, the risk was £500k as above, however there could be some potential savings in the capital budget that could make up for this loss.
- 5.4 Prior to the recent crisis, the key risks such as the Interegg Project starting late, a change in Alumni discounts being factored in differently, and the increased severance costs through Voluntary Redundancies would have resulted in the team working to get back to a balanced budget which they were confident they could have achieved.

5.5 Now the COVID-19 income stream losses will overtake all of the above in the immediate future. The key thing will be working backwards from the university's central cash flow and the OfS now require us to track our liquidity directly and report back.

5.6 SA noted that the attached paper illustrates the worst position and mid-position forecasts. In the worst case scenario we could improve our capital programme, meaning that some projects in the current capital programme could be re-faced to save some cash, for example around £300k works to the main village could now be postponed. This will help the cash position in the short term. The finance team are currently going through and working on refining the projected £1m loss, which will include student car parking refunds and accommodation refunds or waiving rent collection for the final semester. The team are also reviewing the variables and potential for furloughed staff.

5.7 SA briefly discussed our contracts and because in the context of procurement we are classed as public sector we must follow public sector guidelines on contract reviews and renewals at this stage.

5.8 There was a discussion regarding our investments and SA noted that there will be the opportunity to have conversations about how we prioritise strategic investment during this crisis. SA is currently tracking the performance of the university's investment fund which was £3.9m at start of the year. After tracking the drop it was agreed that some of the fund needed to be liquidated in order to save it and protect the capital value. This money has now gone to our bank account and the green deposit will start to add interest for us to ensure something is gained from our investment in the short term.

5.9 The next Finances and Resources Committee will meet on the 24 April and SA was asked to include IT investment within his spend report. **ACTION: SA**

5.10 It was agreed that the Board must be updated as developments arise over the coming weeks regarding University finances. **ACTION: RW/SA**

5.11 **For Decision- Noted**

6. Data Protection & GDPR Annual Report

6.1 SP noted that the attached report provides the Board with an update on FOI queries.

6.2 The second paper considers issues with the previous Audit Report back in the Autumn of 2019 and SP assured the committee that the national audit lead was very satisfied that since that report, the university has structures in place to deal with GDPR appropriately.

6.3 The board thanked SP for his work on this and noted that it provided a good sense of assurance.

7. Approve Anti-Slavery Statement

7.1 This item was deferred to the mid-May virtual Board meeting. **ACTION: ADT to inform the new Governance Officer.**

8. Civic Engagement Brochure

8.1 RW briefly underlined how important this document is as it brings into the public domain just how many ways the university as an entity, but also staff within the university, are actively engaged within the local community.

8.2 We now have members of staff who are sitting on the local culture board and growth boards. There is talk about the university housing some of the box exhibitions on campus and the document focuses on how the campus might be a cultural as well as sporting hub.

8.3 This should strengthen the sense of Marjon making a real contribution to the life of the city and region.

8.4 MJ added that yesterday the university had received confirmation that we have been successful in a funding application that was jointly offered by the OfS and Research England on Student Engagement and Knowledge Exchange which focuses on civic activity. This builds on the work that Dr Saul Bloxham has already been doing with the clinics within his school. The total funding amount will be £250k and will support our civic engagement contribution.

8.5 MJ also noted that it was important we defined the region within this document as Plymouth, Devon and Cornwall to clarify the different council bodies and involve all areas.

8.6 CG asked about the stakeholder engagement plan that was previously discussed at the Board Away Day in November. She asked whether in relation to this document there were any updates on this previous discussion. It was agreed that this would be discussed at a later date when the university is again able to actively engage with stakeholders after lockdown. This would be discussed later in the year. **ACTION: RW**

9. Coronavirus Update: including UCOP Infectious Disease Protocol

9.1 JB reported that our Health and Safety Officer John Chadwick and Estates Manager Lynn Tamsett-White have been doing some absolutely sterling work on this.

9.2 John Chadwick has now moved onto campus to live on site to avoid putting his own son at risk as he is within the vulnerable category. He is also then more available for any on site crises should they arise.

9.3 JB reported that we couldn't ask for someone more appropriate or professional in taking us through these difficult times.

9.4 The Board thanked John Chadwick for all of his hard work and dedication and it was agreed that ADT would pass this message on to John directly. **ACTION: ADT**

10. Assurance on risk- register, process, actions & policy

10.1 It was noted that SA as the Director of Finance is now responsible for the central University Risk Register and there will be an update to the risk register to incorporate the COVID-19 Risks. This will be updated monthly over the coming months. **ACTION: SA**

11. OfS Reportable Events

11.1 SP noted that this was under the previous guidelines of OfS reportable events and that recently in light of the Coronavirus pandemic, there have been new lists of reportable events issued.

11.2 These have been duly noted and include short term financial risks, programme delivery or credit awarding issues and have been received by SMT.

12. Prevent Policy

12.1 This was received as an update and SP noted it had been ratified at the Prevent working group and at SMT.

12.2 The chair noted that this was a very strong document and the Board thanked SP for his work on this.

For Information

13. Minutes of the previous meeting (13 September 2019)

13.1 The Board received and approved with no amendments.

14. To note the minutes of committees

a) Estates Group - approved (2 October 2019)

The Board received and approved.

b) Finance & Resources Committee – approved (16 October 2019)

The Board received and approved.

c) Audit Committee – approved (1 November 2019)

The Board received and approved.

15. BUFDG Guide to University Finance

15.1 The Board noted and received.

16. UCAS Report on Student Lifestyle Spend

16.1 The Board noted and received.

17. Agreed for deferral

18. Agreed for deferral

Action Log 01-04-20

Minute	Action	Owner	Deadline
3.7	John Bailey to update the Board on any progress or updates regarding Project Nightingale.	JB	Next meeting

3.13	It was agreed that Stephen Plant and Ian Luke would produce a paper on how the university is still meeting the OfS Registration Requirements during the COVID-19 Crisis.	IL/SP	Next meeting
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3.28	It was agreed that for the Studio School developments a working group may need to be set up with some of the Governors to discuss action going forward.	ADT/JT	Ongoing
3.34	It was agreed that a message should go out to all staff thanking them for their exemplary work and for going above and beyond to look after and support both each other and our students.	ADT	This week (by 3 April 2020)
4.8	KW and RW confirmed that the Board will be briefed when there is any additional clarity on recruitment changes and any recruitment changes through to September.	KW/ R W	Next meeting
5.9	The next Finances and Resources Committee will meet on the 24 April and SA was asked to include IT investment within his spend report.	SA	24 April

5.10	It was agreed that the Board should be updated as developments arise over the coming weeks regarding University finances.	SA/RW	Ongoing
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7.1	The Anti Slavery Statement to be added to the next virtual board agenda and it was agreed that ADT will inform the new Governance Officer of this item.	ADT	Next meeting
8.6	It was agreed that the previous stakeholder discussion outcomes would be discussed at a later date when the university is again able to actively engage with stakeholders after lockdown. This would be discussed later in the year.	RW	Ongoing
9.4	The Board thanked John Chadwick for all of his hard work and dedication and it was agreed that ADT would pass this message on to John directly.	ADT	This week (3rd April 2020)
10.1	It was noted that SA as the Director of Finance is now responsible for the central University Risk Register and there will be an update to the risk register to incorporate the COVID-19 Risks. This will be updated monthly over the coming months.	SA	Next meeting