

BOARD OF GOVERNORS MEETING

Minutes of the Board of Governors meeting held on Wednesday 31 July 2024 from 4.00pm to 7.30pm.

Present

Andrew Summers (Chair)
Richard Bee (Independent)
Andy Cook (Vice-Chancellor)
Stuart Duncan (Independent)
Esther Gbogboade (President of Students' Union) (until item 7 only)
Professor Lizbeth Goodman (Co-opted)
Dr Markos Koumaditis (Independent)
Chiz Nwaosu (Professional Services Staff Member)
Paul O'Grady (Independent)
Noeline Sanders (Independent)
Alberto Villanueva (Academic Staff Member)
Lee Wilkinson (Independent) (until item 8 only)

In attendance

Christopher Costigan – University Secretary and Director of Strategic Delivery
Raias Bin Nizam – Vice President of Students' Union (item 7 only)
Tony Croudass – Chief Information Officer
Richard Ellis – Managing Partner, MTM (item 10 only)
Karen Ingram – Director of People and Culture
Lawrence Lartey – Director of Innovation, Industry and Enterprise
Adrien Laure – Finance Director
Ceewhy Ochoga – Students' Union Manager (item 7 only)
Professor Simon Robertshaw – Deputy Vice-Chancellor
Emma Shailer – Chief Operating Officer
Tracey Tattersall – Director of Learning & Teaching (item 5 only)
James Taylor – Governance Manager

Apologies

Shoku Amirani (Independent)
Dr Penny Haughan (Co-opted)
Kate Gregory (Independent)
Professor Lisa Stansbie (Co-opted)
Stephen Woodford (Independent)
Paul Wright (Independent)

REDACTED

	CHAIR'S WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS
24/54	The Chair welcomed members to the meeting. Apologies were received from Shoku Amirani, Kate Gregory, Professor Lisa Stansbie, Stephen Woodford, Paul Wright (a new Governor). It was also noted that Andy Rees, the Dean, was not in attendance. A particular welcome was extended to Stuart Duncan, a new Governor, Adrien Laure, Finance Director, and James Taylor, Governance Manager.
	DEEP DIVE
24/55	The Board noted the discussion with students and Derek Yates, Head of Creative Lab, regarding the Careers Lab. The Board noted it had been valuable to talk to students about their experiences.
24/56	The Board reflected on the meeting and drew out the following highlights from the discussion: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The range of opportunities to choose from for students and the levels of motivation they demonstrated were impressive. • The positive feedback received prompted the question of whether more could be done to help students in this way. • The work represented a real step change for the university – identifying and maximising opportunities and ensuring students engaged with those working in industry. There was still more work to be done.
24/57	The Chair expressed his thanks to the students for their participation and to the Director of Innovation, Industry and Enterprise and colleagues for arranging the meeting.
	DECLARATION OF INTERESTS
24/58	Members were reminded to declare any interests, personal or financial, that might relate to the business shown on the agenda for the meeting. No additional declarations were made.
	MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING
24/59	The minutes of the Board of Governors meeting held on 27 March 2024 were approved. There were no actions arising from the minutes. It was noted that the University Secretary would add redactions prior to publication.
	CHAIR'S UPDATE
24/60	The Chair informed the Board that, following interviews, the Governance and Nominations Committee had recommended two candidates to become Governors – Stuart Duncan and Paul Wright. The Board of Governors had agreed to the appointments by e-mail correspondence during July.
24/61	The Chair informed the Board that, following the decision by Noeline Sanders to step down as a Governor and Audit Committee Chair at this meeting, the Governance and Nominations Committee recommended the appointment of Penny Haughan as new Audit Committee Chair. The Board approved the appointment.
24/62	The Chair informed the Board that the Governance and Nominations Committee had recommended that both Richard Bee and Lizbeth Goodman be reappointed for further three-year terms. The Board approved the appointments.
24/63	The Chair updated the Board on recent policy developments, including the recently elected UK government which had signalled a change in attitude regarding higher education. It was

24/64	<p>further noted that the role of the Office for Students (OfS) had been redefined so that its focus was on financial stability and achieving good outcomes for students. A major report on the way the OfS operates had been accepted in full by the government. Following this, Sir David Behan had been appointed as the Interim OfS Chair. It was to be hoped that these movements would lead to higher education feeling less restricted – in particular for Ravensbourne in terms of greater support for creative industries, although it was noted that the university was in a favourable position compared to others. The improved relationship between London government and those in Westminster also seemed promising for London-based universities.</p> <p>The Chair informed the Board that the Governance and Nominations Committee had agreed the Finance Director being a member of the Finance Committee, rather than an attendee at meetings, was anomalous in that it blurred the lines between management and governance. The Committee had agreed to propose a change to Finance Committee’s Terms of Reference, which had subsequently been endorsed by Finance Committee itself. The Board of Governors agreed to the amendment of Finance Committee’s Terms of Reference whereby the Finance Director would be invited to all meetings, rather than being a committee member.</p>
ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION PLAN	
24/65	<p>The Director of Learning & Teaching joined the meeting to give a presentation on the proposed Access and Participation Plan (APP) and fees, investments and targets (FIT) to be submitted to the OfS for approval on 31 July 2024. In particular the following were highlighted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of the APP FIT was a regulatory requirement. • The APP was a four-year plan – from 2025 to 2029. • There was now a requirement to evaluate intervention strategies to close gaps across access, success and progression for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Performance data would be analysed so that gaps could be identified and reduced, which improve understanding of the university’s evidence base and highlight areas where adaptation was needed, using a whole-university approach.
24/66	<p>In discussion the following points were drawn out:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governor colleagues Lisa Stansbie and Penny Haughan had been helpful in drawing up the APP and FIT, referring to the submissions made by their own institutions. • It was interesting to note the Plan showed that 83.6% of RUL students were from one or more underrepresented groups. This needed to be reflected in the way that teaching was delivered, so that it was inclusive for all in terms of their needs, treated them as individuals and gave everyone the opportunity to do the best they could. • This was different to previous ways of working, in that targets had been set before, but the focus was now on closing or reducing gaps, which meant that interventions needed to be demonstrable and realistic. It represented a lot of work to do, but it was felt that the university had been sensible and considerate in what had been set out. • This APP had been academically created and owned, with considerable consultation with the Students’ Union and students in a way that had not been the case previously. London Higher, as the voice of the HE sector in London, had complimented the university on its approach. • Once submitted and approval had been received by the OfS, discussions would begin on the annual intervention targets to be set. The next focus would be on actions. • Expenditure on the APP would involve expenditure of £1.2m in the next year, rising to £1.7m in four years’ time.
24/67	<p>The Board of Governors approved the APP and FIT to be submitted to the OfS on 31 July 2024. The Director of Learning & Teaching left the meeting</p>

VC REPORT	
24/68	<p>The Vice Chancellor introduced his report. He reported that, in relation to the University's financial performance, the forecast was for a year-end operating surplus REDACTED. This was due to the focus on a growth agenda - mobilising partnerships and franchise working. Thanks were extended to the Executive Team and other colleagues for a massive effort, which continued to improve the student experience. Whilst a considerable success, some weaknesses had been exposed, and it was noted the university needed time to catch up with the scale of growth. The Vice Chancellor thanked the Board of Governors for their support over the last year.</p>
24/69	<p>In discussion the following points were drawn out:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the results from the recent National Student Survey were an improvement on previous years, albeit not as much as had been hoped. Again, this was caused in part by the recent scale of growth undergone by the university REDACTED • The issues were known to the university before the survey's publication, such as the need to invest in learning opportunities, capital investment and acknowledgement that the student journey was for three years, rather than simply the final year. As the university grew, different players in the HE market were becoming competitors. Further, film, television and fashion courses had not been updated to reflect changes in those industries over the last few years and so there was a need to invest in technology and new thinking generally. • Any perceived downturn in graduate outcomes was possibly a brief anomaly, as it was currently an employers' market given the high numbers in the sector. • Success for the Start Up Lab would be measured in terms of the numbers of those registering their interest and the numbers of employers who became involved. Work was ongoing in relation to raising the level of funding received.
RSU UPDATE	
24/70	<p>The Students' Union Vice President and Student Union Manager joined the meeting. The Students' Union President introduced the annual Students' Union Update. In particular the following were highlighted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Students' Union's focus over the last year had been the four strategic priorities of (i) rebuilding student communities; (ii) empowering student voices; (iii) supporting sabbatical officers; and (iv) restructuring the Students' Union and equipping for a sustainable future. • Achievements had included social events, student-led staff awards, SU President attendance at Student Voice Meetings and successful elections for the President and Vice President. • There had been a plateau in performance by the Student Union, leading to requests through a student survey for more initiatives and engagement. An Away Day had enabled the SU to consider its future. A commitment to engage more with students and other stakeholders had been made, with a strategy to transform the Union's working. To achieve the necessary improvements, a Transformation Advisory Board (TAB) was being formed, on which it was hoped that there would be Governor representation. • The Student Union would continue to need the support of the Board of Governors, to enhance the student experience.
24/71	<p>In discussion, the following points were drawn out:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That the Student Union Advisory Board had not functioned properly over the last year – how it should operate and its interactions with the TAB would need to be explored. • That the TAB was intended to be focused, high-level and task-specific, only in place for the duration of the transformation journey. • Some quick wins were available, but the transformation journey was due to take two years.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Students' Union had not operated optimally for a number of years – there was a need for some urgency to improve the situation. <p>The Students' Union Vice President, Student Union Manager and Students' Union President left the meeting.</p> <p>ACTION: Vice Chancellor to engage with the Students' Union so that a proposal on future working could be prepared for the Board of Governors.</p>
	2024-2025 BUDGET
24/72	The Vice Chancellor introduced the budget 24-25. REDACTED
24/73	<p>In discussion, the following points were drawn out:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It was commendable that the proposed student number targets for the next year had a direct correlation with the figures in the budget. Future capital plans were not addressed directly, but work in this area would progress once the university's overall strategy had been agreed. The cash balance of £26m could be considerably larger if all the contingency were not employed. How to utilise what was public money would need consideration, as it needed to have a purpose, rather than being treated as savings. The Board would benefit from receiving high level data on strategic investment priorities – for example, the investment in 27 new posts. The large student intake in the autumn would mean that the picture would be clearer by October. FE applications were down so that it seemed the home target would not be met, but the majority of FE funding was lagged, which meant that the budget would not be affected until 2025-2026. UCAS firm acceptance at undergraduate level were 26% higher than the previous year, which was markedly different from others in the sector. Postgraduate numbers were currently low against target, but the bulk of applications would come in from this point to the beginning of the semester. The university was in a position where it could be agile regarding other opportunities, such as the provision of evening products.
24/74	The Board of Governors approved the budget for 2024-2025.
	RISK REGISTER
24/75	The Chair noted that the Risk Register had not changed significantly since it was last considered by the Board.
24/76	<p>In discussion, it was drawn out that whilst staff retention data was included in the Risk Register and many staff engagement activities were now being conducted, an important indicator that should be mentioned in the Risk Register was the level of engagement felt by staff in relation to the university as their employer.</p> <p>ACTION: Executive Team to discuss how levels of staff satisfaction with the university as an employer could be reported in the Risk Register.</p>
	UNIVERSITY STRATEGY 2030
24/77	<p>Richard Ellis, Managing Partner at MTM, joined the meeting.</p> <p>The Vice-Chancellor introduced the item by noting that success for the university needed to be built on the priorities of growth, improved student experience and growing the brand. MTM had consulted with the Executive Team, the Board of Governors, and other staff in an attempt to answer the question of how the university might grow REDACTED whilst adhering to the university's core values.</p>

<p>24/78</p> <p>24/79</p> <p>24/80</p> <p>24/81</p>	<p>Richard Ellis gave a presentation on MTM’s strategy proposals for Ravensbourne. He highlighted the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the guiding policy was to position Ravensbourne at the intersection of creative, technology and business, preparing students for the working world. • REDACTED <p>Prior to discussion, the Vice Chancellor noted that what was proposed was a programme of change management. If the Board endorsed the direction of travel and gave a mandate to proceed, the Executive Tam would take it forward to produce a plan with various streams to be presented at the Board meeting in November.</p> <p>In discussion the following points were drawn out:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • greater discussion, based on detailed proposals for implementation, was essential. • different thinking was needed in order for the university to grow, but the guiding principles of the university should be maintained. Creativity was important to Ravensbourne, but it needed to develop beyond that. • Recent growth had necessitated building a new business around that which already existed. What was proposed would redefine the model, link the two and make it more sustainable and ultimately more successful. <p>The Board endorsed the strategic direction of travel and charged the Executive Team with drawing up detailed implementation plans for consideration at the November meeting.</p>
	SUMMARY OF COMMITTEES
<p>24/82</p>	<p>The Board noted the summary of committees.</p>
	ANY OTHER BUSINESS
<p>24/83</p>	<p>Richard Bee noted that the proposal to write off bad debt agreed by Finance Committee at its 17 July 2024 meeting needed formal approval by the Board of Governors. It was agreed that this would be handled by electronic means after the meeting. <i>[Post meeting note: Chair’s Action was taken after the meeting to approve the bad debt proposal, which will be formally minuted at the next Board meeting.]</i></p>
	DATE OF NEXT MEETING
<p>24/84</p>	<p>The date of the next formal Board meeting was 18 September 2024 4pm-7pm at Ravensbourne University London.</p>
	FAREWELL TO DEPARTING MEMBERS
<p>24/85</p>	<p>The Chair thanked Noeline Sanders for her insight, wisdom, and collegiate way of working whilst a member of the Board of Governors and particularly her leadership as Chair of the Audit Committee.</p> <p>Noeline Sanders thanked the Governors and Ravensbourne staff for their support during her time as a Board member. She believed that Ravensbourne was heading in the right direction and encouraged the Board to continue taking the university forward.</p>