

Minutes:	Board of Governors
Time and date:	10:00, Thursday 4 July 2024
Location:	The Yard, rooms 3.05 and 3.06
Present:	Ian Squires (Chair), Peter Collyer, Alison Court, Stuart Dawkins, Phil Grierson, Abdul Mullick, Katie Normington, Buddy Penfold (until item 167), Beverley Shears, Shikha Singh, and Paul Woodgates
In attendance:	Zoë Allman, Associate Dean (Academic), (item 166), Simon Bradbury, Pro Vice-Chancellor International (items 165c and 167), Lis Clarke, Deputy Director of Marketing and Communications (item 161), John Hurst, Director of Strategic Planning and Insight (item 164), Mike Kagioglou, Pro Vice-Chancellor Research and Business Innovation (item 165b), Priya Karasala, De Montfort Students' Union, Chloe Keenan, Governance Officer, Debbie Muddimer, Executive Director of Finance and Procurement, Simon Oldroyd, Pro Vice-Chancellor Sustainability (item 165e), Susan Orr, Pro Vice Chancellor Education and Equalities (items 165a and 166), Nikki Pierce, Registrar (Academic) and Secretary to the Board of Governors
Secretary:	Nick Jeffs; nick.jeffs@dmu.ac.uk

CONFIRMED

155 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Vivek Ganotra, Jonathan Kerry, Jonathan Mills, Patrick Moody, Sardip Sandhu, and Peter Tansley. Apologies for an early departure had been received from Buddy Penfold.

156 Declarations of any pecuniary, family or other personal interests

No declarations of pecuniary, family or other personal interests were made in respect of any items on the agenda.

The university maintains a Register of Interests, which records standing declarations of pecuniary, family or other personal interests from all members of the Board of Governors and the University Leadership Board.

157 Minutes of the previous meeting

RESOLVED:

That the minutes [157] of the 16 May 2024 meeting of the Board of Governors be approved.

158 Matters arising

All of the matters arising [158] had either been completed or were scheduled for consideration at a future meeting of the board.

159 Report from the Chair

The Chair of the Board delivered an update concerning a range of issues:

- i. Independent governors Peter Collyer and Dan Toner would be stepping down from the board; Peter at the end of the 2024 calendar year and Dan with immediate effect. A recruitment exercise would be launched in due course with the aim of replacing Peter's and Dan's particular skills and experience as well as bolstering the board's resilience in terms of audit expertise.
- ii. The recruitment exercise for the board's governor apprentices would be launched over the summer, with the aim of having up to two apprentices in place in the autumn.
- iii. The Chair had begun conducting annual governor appraisals.
- iv. It was noted that the recent interviews for the role of Deputy Vice-Chancellor had not identified a suitable candidate. The university would give some more thought as to the requirements of the role ahead of a future recruitment exercise. In the meantime, the Pro Vice-Chancellors Education and Equalities, International, and Research and Business Innovation, would assume various elements of the role of Deputy Vice-Chancellor as required. The board welcomed this interim approach.
- v. **[Redacted]**
- vi. Governors were reminded of a visit to De Montfort University International College, which would take place following the meeting. It was suggested that, following a future meeting, governors should also visit the university's placements team.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

160 Report from the Vice-Chancellor

The Vice-Chancellor introduced a report [160] concerning a range of recent developments in relation to the university and the higher education sector as a whole. Arising from the discussion of this item, and questions from governors, the following points were highlighted:

- i. It was suggested that, although it was difficult to be certain at this stage, it was unlikely that the outcome of the December 2023 UKVI visit would have a significant impact on the university's ability to recruit international students to its London campus. It was noted that the university was developing a set of mitigating actions should there be any delay in the UKVI approving the DMU London proposal, whether that be as a result of the outcomes of the 2023 visit or otherwise.
- ii. The refit of the new premises for the DMU Dubai campus in Internet City remained on track.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

161 Recruitment and admissions update

The Deputy Director of Marketing and Communications introduced a report [161] concerning the university's performance in terms of student recruitment and admissions. Arising from the discussion of this item, and questions from governors, the following points were highlighted:

- i. It was noted that the university continued to adjust its approach to student recruitment in light of developments across the sector. These adjustments would, in turn, influence the university's strategies in terms of both conversion and Clearing.
- ii. It was noted that the university would adopt a similar approach to its Clearing operations this year as it had in the previous year, with the exception that all colleagues who were part of the process would be based on campus in the same building.
- iii. It was recognised that the international market continued to be volatile as a result of political developments in both the UK and overseas, particularly in Australia, Canada, Nigeria, and the United States.
- iv. **[Redacted]**

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

162 2023/24 financial position update

The Executive Director of Finance and Procurement delivered a presentation concerning the university's financial performance at Period 10 of the 2023/24 academic year.

RESOLVED:

- a. That the presentation be noted.
- b. That the presentation slides would be made available to the board following the meeting.

163 2024/25 budget and Medium-term Financial Plan

The Executive Director of Finance and Procurement introduced a report [163] concerning the proposed budget for the 2024/25 academic year, and the Medium-term Financial Plan (MTFP) for the five years from 2024/25 to 2028/29. In addition, the Chair of the Finance and Performance Committee provided a summary of the committee's discussion of the budget and MTFP at its meeting on 12 June 2024. Arising from the discussion of this item, and questions from governors, the following points were highlighted:

- i. It was noted that the environment in which DMU was operating would continue to be challenging in the coming years, but that the university's hitherto prudent approach to financial sustainability had helped to ensure that it would be facing those challenges from a position of strength. It was also noted that the success of large growth projects such as the Dubai and London campuses would be key to helping the university to avoid a deficit or break-even position in future years.
- ii. The university would continue to adjust both the 2024/25 budget and the MTFP in light of future changes in circumstances for both DMU specifically and the sector more widely. It was intended that a revised budget be shared with both the

- Finance and Performance Committee and the board in the autumn, following the closure of the September/October student intake window.
- iii. The board commended the 2024/25 budget and the MTFP, and the work that had gone into its development.

RESOLVED:

- a. That the budget for the 2024/25 academic year, and the MTPF for the years 2024/25 to 2028/29, as approved by the Finance and Performance Committee at its meeting on 12 June 2024, be ratified.
- b. That the MTFP would ensure that the university remains a 'Going Concern', and that the plan had been subject to thorough stress testing as set out in the report, be noted.
- c. That the MTFP (subject to any changes approved by the board in the autumn) would form part of the 2024 Annual Accountability Return to the Office for Students be noted.

164 Empowering University strategy update

The Director of Strategic Planning and Insight introduced a report [164] concerning the progress made to date by DMU in meeting the KPTs of the Empowering University strategy. Arising from the discussion of this item, and questions from governors, the following points were highlighted:

- i. The board commended the extent to which the university continued to monitor the performance of its strategy, and that performance to date had been broadly positive, with only a handful of areas being slightly off-target.
- ii. It was noted that the university would be revisiting some of its targets to ensure that they remained realistic. It was agreed that it would be important to balance setting attainable targets against the need to declare the university's intention to strive for, and to achieve, meaningful improvements.
- iii. It was suggested that it would be useful for the university to consider supplementing the ways in which it measured the performance of the Financial Strength cross-cutting theme by including evidence of the success of invest to grow projects, rather than focussing only on areas where progress was off-target.
- iv. It was noted that the university would continue to consider what cultural changes might still need to take place in order to facilitate the meeting of certain strategic targets.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

165a Equality For All implementation plan update

The Pro Vice-Chancellor Education and Equalities introduced a report [165a] concerning the progress made to date against the identified 'success indicators' in the Equality For All implementation plan.

RESOLVED:

That the progress made against the various indicators of success, as outlined in the report, be noted.

165b Financial Strength implementation plan update

The Executive Director of Finance and Procurement introduced a report [165b] concerning the progress made to date against the identified 'success indicators' in the Financial Strength implementation plan.

RESOLVED:

That the progress made against the various indicators of success, as outlined in the report, be noted.

165c Knowledge Creation implementation plan update

The Pro Vice-Chancellor Research and Business Innovation introduced a report [165c] concerning the progress made to date against the identified 'success indicators' in the Knowledge Creation implementation plan.

RESOLVED:

That the progress made against the various indicators of success, as outlined in the report, be noted.

165d Partnerships with Purpose implementation plan update

The Pro Vice-Chancellor International introduced a report [165d] concerning the progress made to date against the identified 'success indicators' in the Partnerships with Purpose implementation plan.

RESOLVED:

That the progress made against the various indicators of success, as outlined in the report, be noted.

165e Sustainability and the SDGs implementation plan update

The Pro Vice-Chancellor Sustainability introduced a report [165e] concerning the progress made to date against the identified 'success indicators' in the Sustainability and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) implementation plan.

RESOLVED:

That the progress made against the various indicators of success, as outlined in the report, be noted.

166 Access and Participation Plan

The Pro Vice-Chancellor Education and Equalities, and the Associate Dean (Academic), introduced a report [166] concerning the university's proposed Access and Participation Plan (APP) for the period 2025/26-2028/29. Arising from the discussion of this item, and questions from governors, the following points were highlighted:

- i. The board commended the APP, noting in particular the benefits of the approach taken by the university in engaging stakeholders from across the institution in the development of the plan. Those stakeholders would continue to act as local champions through the lifetime of the plan.

- ii. It was noted that there was in place a robust governance structure that would facilitate the transition from the existing APP to the new one.
- iii. It was recognised that the APP focused on domestic students based at the campus in Leicester, and that international students and students studying at overseas campuses would be excluded from the associated dataset. However, it was noted that the university continued to take steps to improve and protect the experiences of its international students.

RESOLVED:

- a. That the Access and Participation Plan for the period 2025/26-2028/29 be approved.
- b. That further work would be undertaken to prepare the Access and Participation Plan, and its accompanying annexes for submission to the Office for Students in the autumn, be noted.

167 De Montfort University International College overview

The Pro Vice-Chancellor International introduced a report [167] concerning an overview of De Montfort University International College (DMUIC). Arising from the discussion of this item, and questions from governors, the following points were highlighted:

- i. It was recognised that the university's approach to its partnership with Oxford International Education Group (OIEG) for the operation of DMUIC was a common model for the sector. It was agreed that such a partnership remained valuable to DMU but that it was critical that OIEG continue working towards reducing the level of risk that the college's operations posed to the university.
- ii. It was felt that OIEG were keen to ensure that DMUIC was successful and that any issues that presented risks to the university would continue to be addressed as a matter of urgency. It was noted that steps had already been taken to address issues relating to agents, recruitment from high-risk markets, and the credibility of applicants being accepted onto DMUIC programmes.

RESOLVED:

That the report, including the actions taken by the university, as outlined in the report, be noted.

Buddy Penfold left the meeting at this point

168 DMU Dubai lessons learned action plan update

The Registrar (Academic) and Secretary to the Board of Governors introduced a report [168] concerning the university's progress towards completing the remedial actions identified in the 'lessons learned' review of the DMU Dubai project.

RESOLVED:

That the report be noted.

169 Risk management update

The Registrar (Academic) and Secretary to the Board of Governors introduced a report [169] concerning the university's management of its Corporate Risk Register.

In discussing the Corporate Risk Register, it was noted that the increase in the level of risk around cyber security reflected the heightened level of risk in this area across the sector more broadly, rather than a specific, known threat to DMU.

RESOLVED:

That the Corporate Risk Register, as appended to the report, be noted.

170 Ofsted Self-assessment Report and Quality Improvement Plan

The Registrar (Academic) and Secretary to the Board of Governors introduced a report [170] concerning the university's Self-Assessment Report (SAR) and Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) for its apprenticeships provision and the Art and Design Foundation Diploma (all of which fell under the remit of Ofsted or the purposes of quality assurance).

RESOLVED:

That the SAR and QIP, as appended to the report, be noted.

171 BDO HEI Bulletin on Going Concern

The Executive Director of Finance and Procurement introduced a bulletin [171] issued by the university's external auditors, BDO, entitled 'Going concern considerations for HEI audits, year ending 31 July 2024'.

RESOLVED:

That the bulletin be noted.

172 Member's updates

i. Audit and Risk Committee

In the absence of the Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee, no update was provided. However, it was noted that the unconfirmed minutes of the 10 June 2024 meeting of the Audit and Risk Committee were included at item 178.

ii. Finance and Performance Committee

The unconfirmed minutes of the 12 June 2024, meeting of the Finance and Performance Committee were included at item 181. In addition, the Chair of the committee noted that the board had received updates on a number of the key items that the committee had discussed at its most recent meeting, including the 2024/25 budget and MTFP, but that it had also considered updates on the library development project and the university's procurement function.

iii. People and Culture Committee

The unconfirmed minutes of the 21 June 2024 meeting of the People and Culture Committee were included at item 184. In addition, the Chair of the committee highlighted the following:

- The committee had considered in detail the results of the 2024 staff pulse survey.
- The committee also considered the submission made by the university for the renewal of its Athena SWAN bronze award, which had been submitted in May 2024.
- The committee received an update on the university's corporate health indicators, including the level of compliance amongst staff with mandatory training requirements.

iv. Lead governors for Ofsted and skills

The lead governor for Ofsted and skills present at the meeting provided the following summary of recent activity:

- The university continued to improve the quality of its data in relation to programmes subject to oversight from Ofsted.
- The onboarding process had begun for the next apprenticeships intake.
- It was intended that the lead governors present a formal, annual report to the board in future, starting in the 2024/25 academic year.

v. Academic Board

In the absence of the academic staff governor, and the Academic Board link governor, no verbal update was provided. However, the academic staff governor had provided a note ahead of the meeting highlighting key items that had been considered at the most recent meeting of the Academic Board, including policies relating to academic assessment and feedback, the academic calendar, and the Ofsted Self-assessment Report and Quality Improvement Plan. In addition, it was noted that the unconfirmed minutes of the 1 May 2024 meeting of the Academic Board were included at item 186.

RESOLVED:

That the updates be noted.

173 Recommendations of the Nominations Committee

The Registrar (Academic) and Secretary to the Board of Governors introduced a report [173] concerning a number of recommendations from the Nominations Committee, arising from its meeting on 26 June 2024, regarding the membership of the Board of Governors and its committees.

In discussing this item, it was noted that Sardip Sandhu would be content to continue as Academic Board link governor in the absence of any expressions of interest in the role from other members of the board. It was also noted that the Chair of the Board would make a proposal in due course as to the role of mentor to the student governors, following the completion of the current round of governor appraisals.

RESOLVED:

- a. That the report be noted.
- b. That the recommendations of the 26 June 2024 meeting of the Nominations Committee, as outlined in the report, be approved.

174 Committee of University Chairs' Higher Education Code of Governance self-assessment

The Registrar (Academic) and Secretary to the Board of Governors introduced a report [174] concerning an assessment of the university's compliance with the Committee of University Chairs' (CUC) Higher Education Code of Governance.

RESOLVED:

- a. That the university's continued compliance with the CUC Higher Education Code of Governance be noted.
- b. That the amended compliance document, included as Appendix A to the report, be approved. The document would be published on the university's website following the meeting.

175 Draft agenda for 17 October 2024 strategic away day

The Registrar (Academic) and Secretary to the Board of Governors introduced the proposed agenda [175] for the board's strategic away day, which was scheduled to take place on 17 October 2024.

RESOLVED:

That the proposed agenda be approved. It was noted that a dinner would be held for governors prior to the away day on the evening of 16 October 2024. Further details would be circulated to governors in due course.

176 Constitutional documents

The Registrar (Academic) and Secretary to the Board of Governors introduced a report [176] concerning proposed updates to the university's key constitutional documents, including the Scheme of Delegation, the Standing Orders, the Instrument and Articles of Government, and the board's cycle of business for 2024/25. It was noted that the Scheme of Delegation, the Standing Orders, and the Instrument and Articles of Government, had been reviewed and recommended to the board by the Audit and Risk Committee at its meeting on 10 June 2024.

RESOLVED:

- a. That the proposed revisions to the Scheme of Delegation be approved.
- b. That the proposed revisions to the Standing Orders be approved.
- c. That the Instrument and Articles of Government, for which no changes had been proposed, be approved.
- d. That the board's cycle of business for 2024/25 be approved, noting that it was a 'live' document and, as such, would likely change throughout the academic year

177 Committee constitutions for 2024/25

The Registrar (Academic) and Secretary to the Board of Governors introduced the constitutions for 2024/25 of the Audit and Risk Committee, the Finance and Performance Committee, the Nominations Committee, and the People and Culture Committee [177].

RESOLVED:

That the constitutions for 2024/25 of the Audit and Risk Committee, the Finance and Performance Committee, the Nominations Committee, and the People and Culture Committee be endorsed.

178 Unconfirmed minutes of the 10 June 2024 meeting of the Audit and Risk Committee

RESOLVED:

That the minutes [178] be noted.

179 Cycle of business of the Audit and Risk Committee for 2024/25

RESOLVED:

That the cycle of business [179] be noted.

180 KPMG internal audit plan for 2024/25

RESOLVED:

That the plan [180] be noted.

181 Unconfirmed minutes of the 12 June 2024 meeting of the Finance and Performance Committee

RESOLVED:

That the minutes [181] be noted.

182 Cycle of business of the Finance and Performance Committee for 2024/25

RESOLVED:

That the cycle of business [182] be noted.

183 Unconfirmed minutes of the 26 June 2024 meeting of the Nominations Committee

RESOLVED:

That the minutes [183] be noted.

184 Unconfirmed minutes of the 21 June 2024 meeting of the People and Culture Committee

RESOLVED:

That the minutes [184] be noted.

185 Cycle of business of the People and Culture Committee for 2024/25

RESOLVED:

That the cycle of business [185] be noted.

186 Unconfirmed minutes of the 1 May 2024 meeting of the Academic Board

RESOLVED:

That the minutes [186] be noted.

187 Student complaints procedures

RESOLVED:

That the report [187] be noted.

188 De Montfort Students' Union election report

RESOLVED:

That the report [188] be noted.

189 Items placed under the university seal

RESOLVED:

That the report [189] be noted.

190 Review of the board's performance

Members were content that the board had been effective in discharging its responsibilities, and that all present had been enabled to be effective in their contribution.

191 Date of the next meeting

The next meeting of the Board of Governors would take place at 10:00 on Thursday 26 September 2024 at a location to be confirmed.

192 Any other business

No items of other business were raised.

Meeting duration: 10:00-14:06