

**CONFIRMED MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 22 SEPTEMBER 2020**

**PRESENT:** via Webex

Lord Kerslake (Chair)	Prof Sir C Husbands
Ms J Allen	Mr P Ishola
Mr A Adegbola	Mr C Kenny
Prof J Bale	Prof C Kinsella
Mr D Bradley	Mr N MacDonald
Ms E Buckley	Dr J Morrissy
Mr D Bye	Ms M Munn
Ms K Finlayson	Prof J Patnick
Ms A Foulkes	Mr K Taylor
Dr K Grainger	Ms P Thompson

**APOLOGIES:** Prof P Wiles

<b>IN ATTENDANCE:</b>	<b>AGENDA ITEM</b>
Ms M Boryslawskij, University Secretary and Clerk to the Board	All
Mr R Calvert, DVC Strategy and Operations	All
Prof R Eccleston, DVC Academic	All
Ms D Harry, Chief Finance and Planning Officer	All
Dr S Jackson, Chief People Officer	All
Prof K Kerrigan, PVC Business and Enterprise	All
Prof A Metcalfe, PVC Teaching and Learning	All
Dr L Mooney, PVC Research and Innovation	All
Mr Joe Rennie, Group Director, Student and Academic Services	Item 2.1
Ms L Simons, Senior Administrator Committee Support (observer)	All
Prof C Wigginton, PVC Global and Academic Partnerships	All
Ms T Goodwill, Minute Secretary, Governance, Legal and Sector Regulation	All

**Chair's Opening Remarks**

Minute Ref **BG/20/114**

- 114.1 The Chair welcomed members to the special meeting which had been convened to discuss reports on the following in light of the disruption created by the COVID-19 pandemic:
- i) arrangements for the management of the campus and academic activities in 2020/21;
  - ii) the finalising of the 2020/21 budget including any significant variances or major concerns requiring decision since the Board's approval of the provisional budget at its meeting in July 2020;
  - iii) a potential financial 'do nothing' scenario for the University ahead of further detailed review in the context of the work by the University's Future Strategy Group at the Board's October 2020 Strategy Event.

The Board would also consider the report on the Instrument and Articles of Government which had been deferred at the July 2020 meeting.

Agenda item 1.2	<b>Declarations of Interest</b>	Minute Ref <b>BG/20/115</b>
115.1 There were no declarations of interest.		
Agenda item 1.3	<b>Other Urgent Business:</b>	Minute Ref <b>BG/20/116</b>
116.1 There was no other urgent business.		
Agenda item 2.1	<b>Major Institutional Risks Connected with the Campus Reopening.</b>	Minute Ref <b>BG/20/117</b>
117.1 On Monday 21 September 2020, the UK's COVID-19 alert level was increased due to the rising number of COVID-19 cases. In his statement to Parliament on Tuesday 22 September the Prime Minister announced new restrictions in England to limit the transmission of the COVID-19 virus.		
117.2 The Vice-Chancellor reported the following headlines from the Prime Minister's statement: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• universities, colleges and schools should remain open;</li> <li>• those who can work at home, remotely, should continue to do so where this was possible;</li> <li>• additional measures relating to social activities including venues such as pubs, bars and restaurants.</li> </ul> <p>The University was committed to offering the best university experience for students including face-to face provision whilst ensuring a safe campus environment for students and staff. Over summer 2020, work by staff had focused on the preparations for academic activities including a combination of face-to-face and online provision, consistent with the Department for Education's recently published advice for universities. Staff were working at home unless they need to attend campus for teaching, the on-campus student experience or campus based research activities.</p>		
117.3 It was reported that immediately following the Prime Minister's statement to Parliament some staff, who were not student facing, had contacted the professional services staff member of the Board and expressed their concerns because they were struggling to work from home and did not welcome the prospect of continuing to do so in the long term. In response it was commented that the staff response to the statement highlighted the serious nature of the challenges and the risks to be addressed as a consequence of managing the disruption created by the pandemic. The mental health and wellbeing of staff would continue to be a key area of focus for the University.		
117.4 The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) reported on the preparations for teaching and learning which had been made on the basis of the course delivery principles, supplemented with updated guidance, to provide students with a credible experience. The arrangements in place included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i) students to receive at least four hours of face-to-face teaching on campus. Online learning would include live and recorded provision;</li> <li>ii) support for students included that by student engagement, academic development and diversity teams. This included online learning opportunities for students unable to return to campus owing to their individual needs;</li> <li>iii) building and teaching space readiness. The practicalities of how the social distancing requirements had been applied to campus spaces including classrooms for face-to-face teaching were outlined. There were regular briefings and the maintenance of current guidance and information for teaching staff on the staff intranet. In order to enable staff to make themselves familiar with the practicalities of campus space use the information included room plans showing layout and specified the maximum number of people permitted in a teaching room. Personal protective equipment</li> </ul>		

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- including face masks, hand sanitising and equipment cleaning stations were provided in the campus spaces. Face coverings were to be worn on campus by everyone unless exempt under Government guidelines;
- iv) publication of the semester 1 timetable and preparation of a semester 2 timetable;
  - v) oversight of arrangements for placements with employers by the Silver Group;
  - vi) a rota to enable the management of the return of postgraduate research students to campus;
  - vii) actions to mitigate the disruption to the University's operations created by the pandemic included the:
    - management of teaching staff availability in light of staff absence which may be unplanned and taken at short notice. Some staff were keen to return and others were anxious about returning to teach face-to-face;
    - management of the practicalities of the timetable. Changes to the timetable, if any needed, would be kept to a minimum;
    - balance between face-to-face teaching and online teaching which could be adjusted. The proportion of online teaching could be increased if needed;
    - testing of the resilience of the University's contingency planning.
  - viii) meetings with the University and College Union to negotiate, progress and resolve issues raised.

The unprecedented situation created by the pandemic was new for everyone and current arrangements would be subject to further change as and when advised by the Government. The University's approach in 2020/21 would be informed by student feedback as it continued to learn from experience, adapt and develop its plans.

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- 117.5 The Group Director, Student and Academic Services reported on the preparations and arrangements for the delivery and management of a compelling on-campus experience for new and returning students. The University:
- i) had welcomed students to the campus and today was the second day of Welcome Week. Although the start of the week had felt very different compared to the look and feel of previous years' experience, the University was well placed for delivery of Welcome Week and teaching which would start in week commencing Monday 28 September 2020. This was because of the intensive and commendable work by staff on a series of inter-related workstreams ahead of the semester 1 re-opening to:
    - maintain a COVID-19 secure environment for students and staff consistent with guidance;
    - support students to stay on track;
    - help students to stay healthy and thrive;
    - foster community and identity;
    - provide transition support, whether for a new entrant or to support progression to the next level.
  - ii) had adapted a range of measures to continue to support the student experience. These measures included a remote Clearing operation in summer 2020, a move to online enrolment, the continuing offer and provision of financial support, access to libraries and learning materials, the development of lecture capture, the issue of an 'Insider's Guide to Sheffield' and face coverings to students, the management of small groups of students on tours around the campus with social distancing measures implemented. Following a survey of final year students on the options for graduation 2020, arrangements were in place for the University's graduation ceremonies for the Class of 2020 to be held in May 2021;
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- iii) continued to work with the Students' Union and a considerable amount of work including work on wellbeing, sport and physical activities had been progressed in readiness for semester 1;
  - iv) continued to work closely with Sheffield City Council, including the Director of Public Health in Sheffield and other key partner agencies.
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117.6 Governors commented on and asked questions about the support, health, wellbeing and safety measures in place for staff and students.

**In connection with staff** it was reported that the first staff pulse survey in spring 2020 included a majority of positive responses about remote working from home. However, some members of staff, whether academic or professional services, may be more adversely affected than others by the disruption created by the pandemic, some may not be confident of a return to work on campus and there would be others who may not be able to return owing to their individual circumstances and needs. It was reported that the arrangements in place for staff to report personally and discretely to their line manager in the first instance about personal matters, continued. The staff intranet had guidance on continuing to work remotely, accessing University buildings safely, returning to work, assessment of risk and equality impact assessment. Where necessary, further guidance was available from the Directorate of Human Resources and Organisational Development (HROD) with a view to ensuring that staff were not at risk as a consequence of their individual circumstances. The University's approach to the consideration of individual staff concerns would be fair and consistent.

**In connection with students** the following points were discussed:

- i) the impact that some of the points in the Prime Minister's statement would have on the University's ability to deliver a student experience. In response to a question, the University's arrangements for face-to-face teaching were clarified;
  - ii) the concerns expressed by members of the public and reported in the media in connection with the risks relating to the transmission of the virus following the return of students to universities as campuses re-opened for the start of term. The University's expectations of students and its commitment to them, its work with the University of Sheffield, public health agencies, local Members of Parliament, councillors and representatives who work with local residents' groups were outlined;
  - iii) the University's work with the Students' Union to ensure clear communications to students about the application of local restrictions owing to the pandemic. Suggestions for the effective use of social media, presentation of information on the website and the tone of communications to the University's students, were made;
  - iv) feedback from the University's students that they felt stigmatised by the reports in the media about their return to campus during the pandemic. It was commented that the University's communications should not only focus on the need for students to adhere to local restrictions and the consequences of not doing so, but should also aim to raise awareness and promote a sense of community with clear and balanced content;
  - v) what support the University may offer individuals who may inadvertently fail to adhere to local restrictions;
  - vi) accommodation arrangements for students which included institutional accommodation providers and private rented accommodation landlords;
  - vii) the arrangements in place if COVID-19 was suspected in the University community. The arrangements for contacting parents/guardians of students who become unwell, including the support pathway for individuals self-isolating, were outlined.
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117.7 The Board received the reports and thanked the University for the comprehensive work, care and thinking which had gone into revising the approach to the University's operations to enable the start of semester 1 and the delivery of the student experience for new and returning students. The reported outcomes and position were very impressive. The priority to provide the best possible academic and working experience in a safe campus environment for students and staff continued. The Vice-Chancellor and President of the Students' Union were thanked for their presentations on the BBC Newsnight programme on 21 September 2020 which had been hosted by the University.

Agenda item 2.2

**2020/21 Budget Review and Early financial Outlook**

Minute Ref **BG/20/118**

Paper Ref  
BG/6/20/2.2  
Confidential  
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118.1 When the 2020/21 budget was developed it was recognised that due to the uncertain environment created by the pandemic and the challenges arising from that for financial forecasting and planning, it would be necessary to review the budget in autumn 2020 and, if necessary, to consider amendments to it. The Chief Finance and Planning Officer introduced the tabled report and the review of the budget 2020/21 position which took into account the current recruitment information, post-Clearing and pre-enrolment. The outstanding risks relating to the balance of the year were in the nature of normal in-year movements. It was confirmed that no changes were proposed to the initial 2020/21 budget, including the operational deficit, which the Board had approved at its meeting in July 2020 (minute BG/20/92 refers).

118.2 In response to questions and comments the following were discussed:

- i) the University's compliance with the financial covenants in the loan facility agreements with the banks. It was reported that compliance would be maintained and this had been discussed with the banks;
- ii) the University's approach to mitigate the risks arising from a significant forecast reduction in income from international student admissions arising from the challenges created by the pandemic in different countries including travel constraints. The University's planning assumptions and approach to mitigate the unpredictable included the offer of alternative vehicles for course delivery online and for international students to delay the start of their course until January 2021;
- iii) a sense of how the University might compare with competitors. Individual reflections were shared but it was too early to give a realistic comparison of the University's overall position and assessment of levels of international student recruitment;
- iv) the planned expenditure for student academic services. It was confirmed that no cuts had been made to this expenditure in the budget.

118.3 It was reported that the Universities and Colleges Employers Association (UCEA) had decided not to make a pay uplift offer for 2020/21. The University's position, consistent with that of UCEA and the sector, had been communicated to staff including the reasons why the University had implemented the pay freeze.

118.4 The Board:

- i) noted the latest recruitment position, post-Clearing and pre-enrolment;
- ii) noted that there were no major changes to the 2020/21 Budget, which resulted in an operational deficit, approved by the Board at its meeting in July 2020;
- i) resolved to adopt the Budget as final for 2020/21.

118.5 Updated financial forecasts, based on latest information, including recruitment and international student recruitment positions would be developed and provided to the Board and the Finance and Employment Committee as part of the usual in-year reporting cycle.

- 118.6 **Financial Outlook** As reported previously to the Board, the University's medium-term forecast indicated that the University would not be financially sustainable without addressing key financial challenges. The Chief Finance and Planning Officer presented the financial outlook for the University based on current assumptions. The summary highlighted the key challenges for the University to ensure a sustainable financial future and covered:
- i) the assumptions underlying the scenario;
  - ii) the financial consequences of a 'do nothing' scenario. 'Doing nothing' was not an option under consideration but the figures clearly illustrated the impact of the assumptions in connection with inflation, staff costs, cash and the balance sheet. In response to a question it was confirmed that staff costs included all salaries of the senior staff group;
  - iii) opportunities for improvement including those in connection with the following in light of what had been learned so far from the University's response to the disruption created by the pandemic:
    - the student experience;
    - the previously agreed estate plan and capital budget which were being reviewed. There was a need for a smaller estate footprint, flexible estate spaces and to invest to reduce costs, including the maintenance costs of an ageing estate;
  - iv) the hostile and turbulent external environment including Brexit, a White Paper on Further Education, the Government's response to the Augar review and the Department for Education's policy paper on reducing bureaucratic burden in research, innovation and higher education.

Governors commented that the Board was aware of the financial challenges facing the University prior to the pandemic and that these had been accelerated by the impact of it.

Agenda item 2.3

**Briefing on the Future Strategy Group Process**

Minute Ref **BG/20/119**

- 119.1 In April 2020 the Vice-Chancellor had established a Future Strategy Group (FSG) of senior staff to advise him on the University's longer-term business and operating plan to transition the University to a sustainable operation. The Vice-Chancellor reported:
- i) on the rapid pace of work by the FSG to the series of integrated workstreams, the process and approach taken to propose actions to achieve sustainability;
  - ii) that the emerging outcomes of the workstreams had been shared with the University Leadership Team in September 2020;
  - iii) that the University would consult with the trade unions about the strategic actions;
  - iv) that the pandemic had been a catalyst for change. The University's experience and lessons learned would inform how it could be a more agile, effective and responsive organisation in a hostile financial and operating environment. Detailed propositions to achieve sustainability based on the outcomes of the FSG's work would be considered by the Board at its October 2020 Strategy Event.

**Action:** Vice-Chancellor and University Leadership Team

- 119.2 In response to a comment about the competition for domestic students in recruitment markets and the increasing digitisation of teaching in the sector, it was reported that an analysis of the universities which Sheffield Hallam had lost potential students to would inform the FSG propositions about the University's offer, for consideration by the Board. It was reported that in addition to being the University of the year for teaching quality, the University had demonstrated a fourth year of improvement with a rise of eight places to 47<sup>th</sup> in the Guardian annual university guide and league table which was published in September 2020. This was the University's highest ever position.

- 119.3 The Board received the report. Governors commented on the clear and proactive approach being taken in connection with the budget, financial outlook and the work of the FSG ahead of the Board's detailed consideration at its October 2020 Strategy Event.

The Chair thanked colleagues on the Board and the University Leadership Team for their contribution to the reports and discussions during the meeting. The Board asked that all staff involved in student recruitment including remote Clearing should be thanked for their work.

**Action:** Clerk to the Board

Agenda item 2.4  
Paper Ref  
BG/6/20/2.4  
Confidential

**Instrument and Articles of Government and Regulations**

Minute Ref  
BG/20/120

- 120.1 The Board received the report which contained the draft unconfirmed record of the 26 June 2020 meeting of the Board Effectiveness Working Group (BEWG), the draft Instrument and Articles of Government and the Public Interest Governance Principles checklist.

- 120.2 The Clerk to the Board reported that:
- i) with the exception of the addition of the Board's Standing Orders to the checklist the content of the Instrument, Articles and checklist issued for the July 2020 Board meeting, remained unchanged;
  - ii) following a query from members in connection with paragraph 6.2 on members allowances in the Instrument of Government its content was being reviewed and it would be finalised following advice from the legal advisors.

- 120.3 Subject to the finalisation of paragraph 6.2 in the Instrument to ensure clarity in relation to the staff members of the Board, the Board:
- i) resolved to approve the Instrument and Articles of Government and the Public Interest Governance Principles checklist for submission to the Office for Students (OfS) subject to any requirements that the OfS may advise following receipt of the documents;
  - ii) resolved to approve that the Instrument and Articles of Government take effect from 1 August 2021 and replace the current Instrument (April 1993) and Articles (September 1994) of Government;
  - iii) asked the Clerk to notify the OfS, in autumn 2020 and in advance of the date on which the Instrument and Articles take effect, of any changes to the University's governing documents which might affect the Public Interest Governance Principles;
  - iv) noted the next steps and approach to the University's work on the Regulations in 2020/21. This included a meeting of the BEWG to progress the review and refresh of the University's subsidiary governing documents to create coherent Regulations which uphold the Public Interest Governance Principles. The Regulations would be presented to the Board of Governors for approval at the earliest opportunity in 2020/21 and the work was being programmed to enable recommendations to be made to the Board at its meeting on 23 March 2021.

**Action:** Clerk to the Board

- 120.4 Post meeting note: the Clerk finalised paragraph 6.2 on members allowances in the Instrument with the wording from the legal advisors. The Board would be informed of the final content of the paragraph.

**Action:** Clerk to the Board

Agenda item 3.1  
Paper Ref  
BG/6/20/3.1

**Office for Students (OfS): Update on approach to regulation and information about deadlines for data returns**

Minute Ref  
BG/20/121

- 121.1 The Board noted the progress report on the University's planning for and timing of governors' meetings to ensure that the OfS requirements were met. This included the submission deadlines for data returns for the year ended 31 July 2020 which were signalled in the OfS letter dated 30 July 2020 and detailed in the Regulatory Advice (RA14) published in September 2020.

Agenda item 4

**Date of Next Meeting**

Minute Ref  
BG/20/122

- 122.1 The Board noted that the:
- i) Governors' strategy event would be held remotely on Thursday 22 and Friday 23 October 2020;
  - ii) next business meeting of the Board would be held on Friday 23 October 2020 during the event.