

BOARD OF GOVERNORS MEETING

**Minutes of the meeting of the Board of Governors held on Wednesday 23 March 2023
from 4pm-7pm.**

<p>Present</p> <p>Members</p> <p>Andrew Summers (Chair) Kion Ahadi (Independent member) Zaid Al-Zaidy (Independent member) Shoku Amirani (Independent member) Richard Bee (Independent member) (joined online during item 2) Andy Cook (Vice Chancellor) Professor Lizbeth Goodman (Co-opted member) Kate Gregory (Independent member) Professor Helen Higson (Co-opted member) Markos Koumaditis (Independent Member) Chiz Nwaosu (Staff member) Paul O’Grady (Independent member) Noeline Sanders (Independent member) Zahra Shahsavari (Student Union President) Alberto Villanueva (Staff member) Stephen Woodford (Independent member)</p>
<p>In attendance</p> <p>Christopher Costigan – University Secretary and Director of Strategic Delivery</p> <p>Tony Croudass – Director of IT Karen Ingram – Director of People and Culture Lawrence Lartey – Director of Innovation, Industry and Enterprise Phil MacDonald – Director of Finance Andy Rees – Dean Professor Simon Robertshaw – Deputy Vice Chancellor Emma Shailer – Chief Operating Officer</p>
<p>Apologies</p> <p>Lee Wilkinson (Independent member)</p>



Ravensbourne
University London

Actions

REDACTED



WELCOME AND APOLOGIES	
23/01	All members were welcomed to the meeting by the Chair. A particular welcome was extended to Markos Koumaditis, a new Independent Governor and Chair of the People and Culture Committee. Further welcome was extended to new members of the executive, Tony Croudass and Karen Ingram, as well as to the governance team, Alima Miah and Ola Olukoya. Apologies were received from Lee Wilkinson.
23/02	<p>Before the meeting, Board members had met students from across the University and explored with them why they had chosen Ravensbourne, how their experience compared with their expectations and any areas they thought could be improved. The groups reported back to the Board the following feedback from discussions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students had chosen the University for its industry links; because of the specific course offerings, which were not available elsewhere; and the vocational focus of courses.• Students reported that the expectation of industry links had been met and students valued the opportunity to work in industry, which was often facilitated through links with alumni. Students also enjoyed the intra-course collaboration opportunities and noted the rave 'crew-up' events which offered an opportunity to support Final Major Projects. A particular theme from the groups was significant praise for the careers team.• Students expressed a desire for more inter-course collaboration; more resources and equipment, which especially at busy times could be in high demand; further library resources, particularly for M level students; further support for the FMPs; and more social activities to better establish a sense of belonging and community. The students also reported that the move from terms to semesters had caused some modules to be compressed and at times it was difficult to book rooms.
23/03	The Chair thanked governors and the students for participating in the deep dive.
DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST	
23/04	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	
23/05	The minutes of the Board of Governors meeting held on 16 November 2022 were approved. The University Secretary noted that all the actions were complete. REDACTED the clarity in internal nomenclature regarding the budgeting process was welcomed.
CHAIR'S REPORT	
23/06	The Chair noted the appointment of Markos Koumaditis who was formally appointed by a written resolution of the board from 1 February 2023. It was further noted that following a successful recruitment process for additional governors with HE experience, two offers had been made. The recruitment consultant was currently undertaking checks and in due course their formal nominations would be submitted to the Board for approval by written resolution. The Chair thanked the panel for their time.



23/07	The Chair informed the Board of a recent meeting of the Honorary Awards Committee, and noted a strong list of potential honourees had been identified. The Chair thanked those who had made nominations.
23/08	The Chair noted the paper on energy renewal which was included in the additional materials of the pack. In particular, that paper informed the Board that Chair's action had been taken to secure a new energy provider REDACTED. This was with a renewable energy company and so supported the University's ESG efforts and would reduce emissions by approximately 80%. The Board considered whether this could be used as a marketing tool for students. It was noted the Chair had interrogated the proposal prior to the signing of the contract. Finally, it was noted the paper linked in the pack was an old version and the current version, which had been amended following discussion with the Chair, had now been placed on the portal and the old paper removed.
23/09	Finally, the Chair noted that the date for the VIP Degree Show Reception had been released and would be held on 15 June 2023. Governors were urged to attend and support this important event.
VICE-CHANCELLOR'S REPORT	
23/10	The Vice-Chancellor introduced his report. In particular, he noted the University was making purposeful progress towards meeting its KPIs. Growth had been strong across both the OIEG and OBC partnerships, including a first ever January intake for Ravensbourne. It was noted that two further potential franchise opportunities were currently being investigated. The growth had relieved pressure on the finances and had enabled the executive to approve a pay award in line with the UCEA nationally negotiated pay award, including the 2% uplift which the sector had brought forward to February 2023. Further, £400k of revenue had been released in this financial year which the executive was looking to use to support strategic initiatives as one-off projects before 1 August 2023.
23/11	The Vice-Chancellor reaffirmed the importance of the student experience and noted the arrival of new Heads in Design, Business and Computing and Media. The Board was informed of the University's continuing efforts towards a very student centred approach and it was noted that student engagement officers and learning advisors had recently been appointed who were looking at data to make positive interventions for students who needed additional support. Further, in February the University had held its first assessment boards under the CAF; that data was being analysed to put in place action plans course by course. Finally, it was reported that the NSS now had an over 70% response rate, which improved the potential to see a positive rise in the NSS score, which usually comes out in early July.
23/12	Finally, the Vice-Chancellor reported on institutional efforts to support the culture and brand of the University. In particular, he welcomed the new Director of People and Culture and noted the shift away from just HR as well as the proposals at the Board to introduce a new governance system to support these efforts. The new Director had already done an analysis of the first 100 days in post and that understanding was now being developed into a plan, which would likely lead to revising the workforce KPIs. Finally, it was reported that a PR company had been appointed and was already starting to put out collateral, including the University's connections to Idris Elba and Tinker Hatfield following the award of honorary doctorates.



23/13

In discussion the following points were raised:

- That whilst internationalisation was a very positive step, it did come with challenges. In particular, the University had been working with the recruitment partner to improve the entry standard of students, including regarding English language proficiency, and those conversations continued. It was noted that as the University was only seeking to grow international students to a modest number overall by sector standards, quality should be able to be maintained. It was recognised that international students had different needs; and the University was recruiting several posts to meet those needs and had introduced a compulsory six-week English for Academic Purposes course for all international students. As well as English, the value of a cultural induction was also discussed and it was noted that the University was not approaching this from a deficit model, but understood that the University also had to change, although as most international students were postgraduate business students those staff were already well versed in the needs of international students. Finally, it was noted that the UKVI Basic Compliance Assessment rates were continually monitored and remained positive.
- Regarding the franchise partnership, circa 500 students had been recruited in November, but this was from a much larger pipeline, so entry standards could be maintained. It was noted that staff were now coming into post to support this and a recent visit to the partner by the link tutor had given assurance of the quality of learning and teaching. Currently, students were going through assessment and further insight would be gained from moderation and assessment boards.
- The Board welcomed the new approach to KPIs, although it was noted that some of the descriptions and RAG ratings needed further updating to ensure they matched.
- It was noted that the September recruitment position for domestic undergraduate students was not as positive as 22/23 at this stage. Broadly core creative courses were down, but the newer courses of business and computing were up. However, 22/23 had been a 30% increase on the year before and the comparison of the current year to 21/22 still showed healthy growth. Once international students were included, however, the growth remained healthy year on year, however they had been stripped out as the recruitment team were still learning to analyse how OIEG's pipeline operated so accurate predictions could be made. It was noted that the next big milestone was the decline by default date; but there was still a long way left in the cycle and the volume of applications was not as important as conversion.
- The Board discussed the carbon management strategy and the success of the new energy contract in reducing emissions. Consideration was given as to whether there was potential for a positive communications story.
- That the recent student survey had a 26% response rate, but this was a quick survey (completed over a 2-week period) which was used to support the TEF submission. It was noted it had been promoted through course teams.
- The NSS was progressing well and a more targeted approach had been adopted and the response rate was far in excess of previous years. It was noted that IPSOS MORI would also be calling eligible students.
- The Director of Finance informed the Board that the year-end forecast was currently at a -£1.4m accounting deficit against an agreed outturn of -£1.6m. Once the non-cash LGPS pension provision was removed, the forecast was a £136k surplus. It was reported that the position appeared to be improving, and



	<p>so £400k had been released to support strategic non-recurrent revenue projects prior to year-end.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Board welcomed the investment in EDI, particularly noting the investment in anti-racism training. The Chair informed the Board he would be undertaking the training and encouraged Board members generally to participate.
STUDENTS' UNION REPORT	
23/14	<p>The President of the Students' Union presented the SU report and drew out salient points, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The President thanked the Board for support which had been given personally to them and noted how it helped them grow. It was noted some work was needed on the prayer room, including the size of spaces and their use also as quiet space. The President noted the University was aware of and looking to rectify. In relation to international students, the President welcomed the new international student support officer and further welcomed the expansion of this team to support growth. It was noted that now the University had three intakes, this meant three induction periods, but it was difficult to maintain welcome efforts due to funding. It was reported that international students were seeking these opportunities and they wanted to feel part of the community. Finally, it was noted that it may be valuable to look at the international student lifecycle holistically, particularly hand-offs to ensure there are no gaps. The Board was informed that clubs and societies continued to grow and a particular thanks was extended to the Vice-President, who was also leaving shortly. Finally, it was reported that a successful election had been undertaken for the VP post for the next academic year, but unfortunately the President post had not been filled and so work continued to secure a Presidential candidate.
23/15	<p>In discussion, the Board welcomed and noted the report and commented:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> That clubs and societies were a great forum for collaboration and cross-disciplinary learning, which had been identified during the deep dive as an area for development. The Board was informed they were advertised on social media and Aula, but they may need a more visible presence as a lot of engagement was due to word of mouth. That the election process for sabbatical officers was run by the SU staff, so work to secure a President would continue in the absence of the current sabbatical team.
STUDENT VALUE AND OUTCOMES	
23/16	<p>The Chair invited the Dean and Deputy Vice-Chancellor to introduce the item on student value and outcomes, noting the board pack had included some introductory reading, including the TEF submission, Degree Outcomes Statement, Complaints and Appeals Report, Value for Money Statement and TRAC.</p>
23/17	<p>The Dean and Deputy Vice-Chancellor presented the papers to the Board, particularly drawing out the TEF submission, noting this was based on NSS (student experience) and student outcomes data. For student outcomes, the University was within or above benchmark, but unfortunately for student experience, whilst students achieve well, these metrics were below benchmark. Through the submission, the University had put</p>



<p>23/18</p>	<p>forward the context for the data, particularly noting the impact of Covid on the University's course mix; the impact of one course on the overall NSS scores; and the recent survey which showed a different picture of satisfaction. There was a push for a Silver rating and the submission had emphasised outcomes, industry links and the new curriculum offer, which was interdisciplinary and enabled core values to run through all courses.</p> <p>In discussion, the Board welcomed the TEF submission, which it was felt was an excellent summary and presented a convincing narrative. The Board further commented:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• That the University's previous TEF award was silver, but the data had been more positive; however, there was scope for the commentary to lift the data as the data and commentary both represented 50% of the panel's considerations.• That there had been significant improvements to the University and its learning, teaching and student experience over the past few years.• That the Students' Union had suggested a gold award, and whilst this was an unlikely result, it showed how much the University had improved.• That the DFP course, which had seen challenges, skewed the results due to its size. This linked back to the deep dive, where students had spoken about opportunities to collaborate and access to equipment. It was noted, there were plans to give DFP a dedicated space in the building to create a better sense of community and belonging on the course.• That those who received Silver or Gold tend to promote their TEF results whereas those with Bronze do not. It was not thought to be a key tool for student decision-making. However, the underlying data did impact on league tables.• That results will be published in the summer and the University would seek to learn from Gold institutions.
<p>23/19</p>	<p>The Dean and Deputy Vice-Chancellor introduced the additional papers. In discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Dean introduced the Degree Outcomes Statement and noted that 75% of undergraduate students obtained a good degree. The University awarded more first class degrees than the sector, but for CAF students the degree algorithm had been amended to bring this in line with the sector. Finally, it was noted the BAME award gap was 14% (against a sector benchmark of 10%) and although it had reduced from prior years, it was a key area of focus to improve.• In relation to the Student Complaints report, the Dean reported that the number of complaints felt broadly right for institutional size and it was noted that a recent internal audit from KPMG had concluded that there was significant assurance with only minor improvements needed for complaints handling. Communication issues appeared to be reducing, but one particular complaint had led to compensatory payments. The Dean reported the use of 'co-gen' groups which offered an informal opportunity to receive feedback and improve the student experience. Information on appeals was introduced and noted.• The TRAC return and Vale for Money Statement were presented and noted.• The Board was informed of recent key developments, including drawing together key teams such as timetabling, academic administration and learning advisors to provide a better service to support student learning and attendance.• Further, a new academic promotion model had been introduced which enabled staff to move from lecturer, to senior lecturer to associate professor. This was supported by the People and Culture team and accompanied the academic workload model, which supported time for knowledge exchange and research as well as funding, which was critical for promotion.



<p>23/20</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In relation to the broader student experience it was noted that solid foundations had been set from which the executive was building. This included rolling out the work-based learning module at the end of year 2; supporting collaborative learning; changing the organisational culture; and considering the capital requirements and needs of the building, and how the building might help (or hinder) a sense of community and collaboration. Ultimately, it was hoped Ravensbourne would be the destination of choice for both staff and students. Finally, the Board recognised the work which had been done around growth and partnerships, with new staff coming on board to support these efforts. <p>The Board affirmed that it was assured that academic quality and standards were being maintained through the governance system and that it was further assured students receive value from their studies which led to positive student outcomes.</p>
<p>SPACE PLANNING BUSINESS CASE</p>	
<p>23/21</p>	<p>The Chair noted the space planning business cases, which had been previously discussed and recommended to the Board by the Finance Committee. The Finance Director outlined the key Heads of Terms REDACTED. The building was open 24/7, opening up the possibility of weekend teaching, and had a capacity of 400 at any one time, although it could support student growth well above this number through proper utilisation. In the negotiations, the University was being supported by the property agent who had assisted with the acquisition of the Institute.</p>
<p>23/22</p>	<p>In discussion the Board noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The current building was configured as office space and £REDACTED had been set aside for remedial works. That the main purpose of acquisition was to support new teaching space for growth. planning was the major risk to the timeline. It was reported the University was currently discussing a pre-application with the council, but had been informed the current proposal was against the council policy to invest in office space. The executive was therefore focussing the application on how the proposal did support jobs growth and the economy. It was intended to meet with senior council figures to explain the proposal. Contingency plans were currently being drawn up if approval was not obtained in time, including extending the teaching day, reducing demand for September and better utilisation; noting it was not practical to secure other facilities. However, as the facilities were open plan (as was the existing building), it was felt that even a late acquisition may be able to be turned around quickly to make the space useable. The Board noted that expert advisors were being used to support the process and Paul O’Grady had also been briefed.
<p>23/23</p>	<p>The Board approved the business case for the acquisition of a new premises.</p>
<p>VLE BUSINESS CASE</p>	
<p>23/24</p>	<p>The Chair introduced the business case and the Dean noted the executive was seeking permission to acquire a new VLE provider and was currently in a tender process. REDACTED The Board was informed the current VLE was problematic and what had seemed unique at the time had not proven fit for purpose. The current VLE had been secured for longer, but still presented considerable risk to the University.</p>

23/25	The Board approved the paper and authorised the proposed cost envelope.
GOVERNANCE REVIEW	
23/26	The Chair presented the paper for a proposed governance review on board dynamics. The Board approved the suggested governance review and the University Secretary was tasked with taking it forward.
NEW COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE	
23/27	The Chair introduced the new terms of reference for a proposed People and Culture Committee and separate Remuneration Committee. It was noted these had been discussed and recommended for approval by both the Nominations and Governance Committee and the OD Remuneration Committee.
23/28	The Board approved the terms of reference of the People and Culture Committee and Remuneration Committee and formally disbanded the ODRem Co.
CYCLE OF BUSINESS	
23/29	The Chair introduced the Cycle of Business which had been reviewed by committee chairs. The Board approved the cycle of business.
SCHEME OF DELEGATION	
23/30	The Chair introduced the Scheme of Delegation and noted it had been previously scrutinised and was recommended to the Board for approval by the Nominations and Governance Committee and Finance Committee.
23/31	The Board approved the amended Scheme of Delegation.
INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL AUDITOR FEES	
23/32	The Chair introduced the proposed 23-24 internal and external auditor fees. The fees had been agreed after negotiation and it was proposed to extend the term of office of both the internal and external auditors REDACTED It was noted that although the Audit Committee had not been able to discuss the paper, it had been circulated and the University Secretary had discussed the paper with the Audit Committee chair.
23/33	The Board approved the proposed internal and external auditor extensions, the timeline for renewal and the proposed fees.
SUMMARY OF COMMITTEES	
23/34	The Committee Summaries were noted.
REGULATORY MATTERS	

23/35	The Board noted the Gender Pay Gap report.
23/36	The Board further noted the Prevent Return. The University Secretary informed the Board that confirmation earlier in the day that no further information was required and the Prevent return was now closed.
DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS	
23/37	It was noted that the next meeting was the Strategy Day on 10 May 2023, which would be held at Amazon's headquarters in Shoreditch. The theme of the meeting would be partnerships and a draft agenda had been included in the pack.
23/38	The next Board meeting was on 26 July 2023 and would be held at Ravensbourne.
ANY OTHER BUSINESS	
23/39	It was noted that the week prior to the meeting had been neurodiversity awareness week and that 1/5 people are neurodiverse. It was commented that many HE papers have acronyms or abbreviations and neurodiverse people could be better supported by a glossary of terms.
23/40	The Chair led a vote of thanks to retiring members, Helen Higson, Deputy Chair, and Zahra Shahsavari, retiring President of the Students' Union.
23/41	In particular, the Chair noted that Zahra had been on the Board just over 1.5 years and particularly thanked her for the work on the important TEF submission. The Chair further thanked Helen and noted her important contribution to the board and institution, including involvement in the appointment of the current Chair and Vice-Chancellor. Helen was thanked for giving the Board the benefit of her expertise and knowledge, as well as her ability to communicate with clarity on key points. It was noted how important Ravensbourne was to Helen and the Board wished her well with her new responsibilities. Helen reflected on the important milestones for which she had been present, including TDAP and university status and thanked the University for its support, noting it was a very difficult decision to retire.
23/42	The Vice-Chancellor echoed the vote of thanks from the Chair.
23/43	There being no other business the meeting was closed at 7.22pm.