

Confirmed Minutes

Meeting:	Board of Directors' Meeting
Date:	3 June 2024
Time:	1 pm – 3 pm
Venue:	Room 101, Euston Road

Name	Designation
Carol Cook - Chair	Non-Executive Director
Melanie Fellowes	Non-Executive Director
Abdul Pisavadi	Non-Executive Director
John Fairhurst	Principal and Chief Executive Officer
Shabnam Karim	Chief Operating Officer and Chief Financial Officer
Alena Bakare*	Student Representative
Sayed Sadat*	Student Representative (Student President)
Orlagh Maye	Staff Representative (Academic)
Sara Sackey	Staff Representative (Professional Services)
Maria Jackson - Secretary	Head of Governance and Company Secretary

In attendance:

Name	Designation
Sunmi Ayorinde	Deputy Chief Operating Officer
Cal Courtney	Deputy Chief Executive Officer
Joan O'Mahony	Deputy Principal
Michiel Barnard	Shareholder
Riaan Jonck	Shareholder

PRELIMINARY ITEMS

1.0	<p>Welcome and Apologies</p> <p>C Cook welcomed everyone to the meeting including the shareholders who had taken the opportunity to attend whilst visiting the Executive Directors. The shareholders did not take part in any decision-making.</p> <p>M Jackson reported that apologies had been received from S Sadat and A Bakare.</p> <p>Declarations of interest</p> <p>There were no declarations of interest made.</p>
2.0	<p>Minutes for approval and Action Tracker/Matters Arising:</p>
	<p>2.1 <u>Minutes from the meeting of 18 March 2024</u></p> <p>The minutes of the meeting of 18 March 2024 were approved.</p> <p>2.2 <u>Action Tracker and Matters Arising</u></p> <p>C Cook highlighted the following from the Action Tracker where updates were due:</p>

	<p>January 2024 Meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agenda Item 18: Completed. The accounts were signed on 17 April 2024 and filed at Companies House. S Ayorinde was subsequently informed so as to arrange for publication of our Value for Money Statement. <p>Matters Arising</p> <p>C Courtney commented on C Cook’s invitation to the student representatives under Agenda Item 5 to email her directly should they feel that we are not facilitating the student voice and said that management should be given the opportunity to resolve any issues prior to students raising them with the Chair of the Board. C Cook clarified that the invitation was in relation only to the student voice within the Board as it was her responsibility to ensure that Board meetings are conducted in an inclusive manner.</p> <p>C Cook noted that a review of the Board’s effectiveness was due and asked that the Student Voice also be considered. She asked for a report therefore that sets out how the Student Voice is facilitated within the structures set out in our Corporate and Academic Governance Framework and how it is heard in practice, covering also its effectiveness and impact.</p> <p>Actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> M Jackson to report on how the Student Voice is facilitated within the structures set out in our Corporate and Academic Governance Framework and how it is heard in practice, covering also its effectiveness and impact.
<p>3.0</p>	<p>Chair’s Update [including Chair’s Action taken since previous meeting]</p> <p>C Cook reported that she had not had cause to take Chair’s Action on any matters since the Mach 2024 Board meeting.</p>
<p>STRATEGIC BUSINESS</p>	
<p>4.0</p>	<p>Principal’s Report (For information)</p> <p>J Fairhurst provided an update on the Migration Advisory Committee’s report on the Graduate route as publication of the report (commissioned by the government) had been too late for inclusion within his Principal’s Report. He explained that the Migration Advisory Committee has recommended that the 2-year Graduate Visa remain unchanged as no evidence of any significant abuse had been found. However, he pointed out that we would not see any actions in this space until after the general election.</p> <p>C Cook commented on HEPI’s recent report on continuation which she had found very interesting as it recognises that non-continuation is a hugely complex issue and one that is amplified in small providers with small cohorts. C Cook added that the report provides useful context to our own student outcomes from a continuation perspective. However, she questioned the assumption within the report that all entrants to higher education arrive at the same point and are then judged against that assumed level playing field.</p> <p>J O’Mahony commented that providers struggle with poor data from structured exit interviews due to low responses. Many are therefore focused instead on getting the same information from high quality surveys that are conducted whilst students are still engaged.</p>
<p>ACADEMIC QUALITY AND THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE</p>	

5.0

Student Guild Report

M Jackson presented the Student Guild Report on behalf of S Sadat and highlighted the following key points:

- The Student Guild has applied for affiliated membership of the NUS. This will bring a number of benefits including opportunities for coaching, funding, empowering the Guild and providing access to a range of extra-curricular activities including those designed to support professional development.
- The Guild's AGM took place on 26 March 2024 and the Guild will be responding formally to the issues raised at its June 2024 Board of Trustees' meeting.
- The Student Staff Liaison Manager has updated the Student Representation Handbook and the student representatives have been provided with training by the Quality team on their roles within committees from a governance perspective. The representatives will also be receiving leadership training covering communication skills and teamwork.
- The Student Guild is currently focusing on how to enhance the postgraduate student voice.

M Fellowes noted the question raised at the AGM around mental wellbeing and asked about the support available to students in this space and the Institute's approach to the prevention of suicide. C Courtney said that he had recently developed a Suicide Prevention and Response Plan which involves the establishment of a Suicide Postvention Team that he chairs. M Jackson added that we also have a team of Mental Health First Aiders and a Disability and Wellbeing Manager with particular expertise in this area.

C Courtney expressed concern at the likely cost of affiliate membership of the NUS and asked what approval process the Guild had followed to apply for membership as he assumed that a student referendum would be required. M Jackson said that she would need to seek advice from the Guild Manager on these points. **[Redacted]**

Although C Cook stressed that any decision for the Guild to become an affiliated member of the NUS was not a matter for Bloomsbury Institute to decide upon or comment upon, she did ask that the Guild Manager check the procedural requirements to see what consent is needed.

J Fairhurst noted the training that had been provided to the student representatives but said that there still seemed to be some uncertainty as to which matters should be raised within the various committees. By way of example, he cited a request he had received earlier in the day from one of the representatives to discuss the status of the Law Clinic in Academic Committee (the most appropriate forum would have been the LLB Course Committee). J O'Mahony said that this uncertainty might be because not all the student representatives had attended the training. In the circumstances, O Maye recommended that the training be repeated for those who missed it and that training or communication be ongoing. C Courtney added that the Student Guild should be able to advise student representatives on this matter whilst M Jackson reported that the Student Staff Liaison Manager and Guild Manager were currently working on some flowcharts designed to clarify which matters should be raised at which committees.

Linked to the above, C Cook asked how students are advised on where they can find support generally on any issues or questions they might have, noting that reading through the numerous policies on our website to find an answer might prove daunting. M Jackson explained that within the Student Handbook we have a table listing all our student facing policies with a one or two-line description of each, but suggested we perhaps include information on who students should contact for what.

J O'Mahony reported that the Guild Manager and Student Staff Liaison Manager had referred a few matters through to her recently and said that the students concerned had been very impressed with the speed of response given.

Actions:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • M Jackson to ask the Guild Manager to check procedural consent requirements for the Guild to become an affiliated member of the NUS.
<p>6.0</p>	<p>Academic Performance Report – March 2024</p> <p>J O’Mahony presented the March 2024 Academic Performance Report, explaining that it includes February 2024 Award Board data.</p> <p>J O’Mahony highlighted the following key points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are seeing continual improvement at a postgraduate level. • Following the closure of the Foundation Year, we are seeing some improvement on our standard 2 and 3-year undergraduate programmes. Some of the improvements are due to small but impactful initiatives. • The main reasons for non-continuation are personal (including visa issues), financial and academic failure. • No students were withdrawn for academic failure from the February 2023 FY intake. <p>A Pisavadi asked how many students we currently have on University of Northampton degrees and when we could expect them to complete. J O’Mahony agreed to check and report back.</p> <p>Commenting on the difference in performance levels between undergraduates and postgraduates, C Cook asked whether there were any particular initiatives from postgraduate delivery that could be extended to the undergraduate students. J O’Mahony explained that there were not. However, she reported that we would be re-introducing our personal tutor scheme for all students from October 2024 and said that this should help to improve both continuation rates and student outcomes. She said that another possible development could be the introduction of a One Stop Student Service which the SLT have been discussing in recent months. O Maye said that the main difference between undergraduate and postgraduate students is that postgraduate students tend to be more motivated and that it is this rather than initiatives that has a major part to play in academic performance.</p> <p>C Cook asked whether our students would be eligible for exit awards should they not complete their degrees. J Fairhurst confirmed that they would be, explaining that undergraduate students are eligible for an exit award upon completion of a minimum of 120 credits at Level 4 or higher [120 credits = Cert HE; 240 credits = Dip HE; 300 credits = Ord Degree]; and postgraduate students are eligible for a PG Cert HE upon completion of 60 credits, and a PG Dip HE upon completion of 120 credits. C Cook then asked whether staff have conversations with students around their eligibility for an exit award when the students inform them that they are thinking of leaving, and whether staff subsequently keep in touch with the students to inform them of their options. S Karim explained that the Director of SEWS would have this type of conversation with the students, but agreed to look at communications in this area.</p> <p>[Redacted]</p> <p>J Fairhurst commented that if the proposed Risk Management Framework (with the associated Corporate Risk Register and KPIs) are approved at the Board’s July meeting, the Board (and Audit and Risk Committee) will be more concerned with overseeing OfS compliance, with academic performance being reported upon and monitored in Course Committees, Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee and Academic Committee. In addition, he reminded the Board that C Cook attends meetings of the Academic Committee in order to assure herself and the Board of the quality of our academic governance.</p> <p>[Redacted]</p> <p>Actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • J O’Mahony to report back on the number of UoN students we currently have and when we could expect to see the last student graduate.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • S Karim and S Ayorinde to review student comms around exit awards.
7.0	<p>Academic Assurance Report – March 2024</p> <p>J O'Mahony presented the March 2024 Academic Assurance Report, highlighting the following key points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both internal and external recognition of the quality of our offering and delivery has been included in the form of commentary on our relationship with our PSRBs, the appointment of a new External Examiner for our In-Bloom programme, the success of 7 staff members achieving Fellowship status, and student feedback. <p>C Cook noted the positive external recognition received but questioned whether such factors have an impact on a prospective applicant's decision to apply. J Fairhurst said that prospective applicants are normally influenced by our website, professional body accreditations, NSS results, student testimonials and impressions formed at our Open Days. C Courtney added that our new partnership approach is also having a significant impact on domestic application decisions as potential applicants now have a strong feeling of connection with Bloomsbury Institute. C Courtney reported also that he has developed relationships with a substantial number of London schools and colleges. J O'Mahony endorsed C Courtney's comments, reporting on the incredible outreach work that her team have been involved in with the Head of MCSR. J O'Mahony cited initiatives such as Dragon Dens events. C Cook welcomed the success of Bloomsbury Institute's outreach work and stressed the importance of continuing with the same.</p> <p>J Fairhurst took the opportunity to report on the work that the Student Guild puts into creating a sense of community for our students. C Cook commented on the dynamism of the Guild team and the huge impact they have on the student experience, describing them as great ambassadors for Bloomsbury Institute.</p> <p>C Courtney said that the way in which we build connections with our students will differ depending on their profile. Consequently, initiatives directed at international postgraduate students working part-time will look very different to those for undergraduate students.</p> <p>J O'Mahony reported that she would be reviewing the structure of the Academic Assurance Report at the end of the current academic year.</p>
8.0	<p>Academic Committee Report – March 2024</p> <p>The Committee received and noted the Academic Committee Report.</p>
9.0	<p>Student Recruitment and Admissions Update</p> <p>There were no updates to report.</p>
AUDIT AND RISK	
10.0	<p>Prevent Risk Assessment – May 2024 Review</p> <p>M Jackson presented the May 2024 Review of the Prevent Risk Assessment, explaining that no amendments have been made to the risk ratings. Only updates to existing measures/actions to be taken have been made.</p> <p>C Cook asked whether there was any need to amend our risk ratings from a student recruitment perspective. J Fairhurst confirmed that no such amendment was required.</p> <p>The Board of Directors approved the May 2024 review of the Prevent Risk Assessment.</p>

<p>11.0</p>	<p>Access and Participation Plan KPIs</p> <p>11.1 <u>APP KPIs May 2024 Review</u></p> <p>11.2 <u>APP KPI data</u></p> <p>J O'Mahony presented the above reports explaining that the most recent year of data for continuation gaps is for the 2021-22 starters and that the last set of reportable data prior to this was for 2018-19 starters due to a period of non-recruitment. As a result, she said that two-year and four-year aggregates stretch back over a four to-six-year period for continuation.</p> <p>J O'Mahony flagged the work that she would be continuing to do under our new APP in relation to the outcomes of Black students compared with White students and students with a disability compared with students with no reported disability. From an ethnicity perspective alone, she reported that the continuation gap has been negative across all years except for last year when 18 out of 28 Black students continued (64.3% compared to 35 out of 42 White students (83.3%)). However, to put the figures in context, she explained that in 2021-22, five more Black students would have needed to continue for the gap to be zero.</p> <p>J O'Mahony reported that the figures shown in relation to ethnicity might change as she had sent a query to the OfS on our ethnicity data. However, she said that she did not expect to receive advice back until July 2024.</p> <p>J O'Mahony then highlighted the progress made in relation to attainment, namely a reduction in differentials between students graduating with a "good honours degree" (defined by the OfS as either a First or a 2:1). However, she said that the data was likely to change as students have the opportunity to amend their "status" choices at re-enrolment each year. C Courtney questioned how it was possible for a student to change their status for things such as ethnicity. In the circumstances, J O'Mahony said she would check with the Head of Data Management and Statutory Returns on this point.</p> <p>J O'Mahony reported that the OfS would not be publishing graduate progression data until July 2024.</p>
<p>FINANCIAL AND CORPORATE</p>	
<p>12.0</p>	<p>The Chair noted that there were no reports for this meeting.</p>
<p>NOMINATIONS AND GOVERNANCE</p>	
<p>13.0</p>	<p>Governance Updates</p> <p>The Board received and noted M Jackson's Governance Updates report.</p> <p>C Cook reminded the Board that it had discussed previously the idea of devoting each January Board meeting to discussions (primarily) on strategy, and recommended that this be done starting with the January 2025 meeting. The Board agreed to this recommendation.</p> <p>C Cook also commented on discussions had within the Audit and Risk Committee at its May meeting on the Committee's role in relation to risk. She reported that the Committee had agreed that its role was one of oversight and challenge rather than "monitoring". The Board agreed.</p> <p>Actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • M Jackson to ensure that going forward the focus of the January Board meetings should primarily be on strategy.

COMPLIANCE AND REGULATION	
14.0	The Chair noted that there were no reports for this meeting.
15.0	<p>Responding to unlawful harassment in HE: OfS Expectations</p> <p>M Jackson presented her report on Responding to unlawful harassment in HE: OfS Expectations, reminding the Board that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The OfS had written to the Chairs of all HE governing bodies on 22 March 2024 to remind them of “the important role higher education institutions play in supporting students who have experienced harassment, and in acting where speech and other action crosses the boundary into criminal behaviour.” The letter also set out expectations around antisemitism. • In the circumstances, C Cook had asked the Head of Governance and Company Secretary to set out for the Board Bloomsbury Institute’s approach to harassment and the extent to which it meets the OfS expectations. This was done and the report shared with the Board by email. • Although C Cook had said that she did not feel that further action was required, she asked that the Head of Governance and Company Secretary’s report be tabled for discussion at the June 2024 Board meeting. <p>In presenting her report, M Jackson stressed that whilst the OfS has focused within its letter on antisemitism, we do not “discriminate” when it comes to harassment and so our policies and procedures cover harassment of all kinds. However, she explained that we do make specific reference to antisemitism in some of our documents, but this is by way of an example of harassment.</p> <p>Based on the information provided, M Jackson encouraged the Board (a) to conclude that of the four expectations highlighted by the OfS, we meet three in full and one in part, and (b) where we have met one expectation in part only to take comfort from the proposed actions. M Jackson added that the timing of these actions would be dependent on publication of the OfS guidance on the new Condition E6 in relation to Harassment and Sexual Misconduct.</p> <p>The Board agreed that no further action was required in response to the OfS letter.</p>
16.0	<p>Access and Participation Plan</p> <p>16.1 <u>APP: Update Report</u></p> <p>J O’Mahony provided a brief update on development of our new Access and Participation Plan (APP), explaining that consultations had taken place with staff during a recent Staff Meeting and that discussions on the Plan had also been held in a recent Teaching and Learning Forum, Research Forum and Student Staff Consultative Forum. She added that she is also planning a couple of workshops for later in the month.</p> <p>J O’Mahony reported that the new APP is due for submission to the OfS by 1 October 2024, and it was likely that she would share a draft of the plan with the Board in July.</p>
POLICY AND DOCUMENT APPROVAL	
17.0	Data Protection and Confidentiality Policy

	The Data Protection and Confidentiality Policy was approved by the Board.
18.0	Student Protection Plan The Student Protection Plan was approved by the Board with the Board noting that the Plan would also require approval by the OfS.
OTHER BUSINESS	
19.0	C Courtney reported on the recent Graduation Ceremony hosted by Wrexham University and said that around 100 Bloomsbury Institute had attended.
DATE/TIME OF NEXT MEETING	
Date: 29 July 2024, 1 pm to 5 pm, venue to be confirmed.	