

University of Lancashire

**Unreserved Minutes of the University Board Meeting Held on 15 May 2025 at 2.00pm at The
Belsfield Hotel, Bowness-on-Windermere, Cumbria**

Present:

Anne McCarthy (Chair)

Graham Baldwin
Jon Baldwin
Jim Carter
Luke Fitzgerald
Ridwanah Gurjee

Lesley Lloyd
Ruth Lowry
Khalil Rehman
Rachel Robins

In attendance:

Lisa Brooks (Governance and Compliance Manager)
Ruth Connor (Deputy Vice-Chancellor)
Craig Darlison (Executive Director of IT and Digital Services) – for Item 10/UB1324
Carolyn Johnson (Executive Officer to the Vice-Chancellor)
Ken Lee (Chief People Officer)
Fiona Winters (Head of Governance/Deputy Clerk to the Board)

UB1315. Welcome and Apologies

The Chair welcomed all present.

Apologies for absence had been received from Richard Frediani, Richard Hext, Victoria Hutchinson, Lorraine Norris, Fiona Rayment, Lindsay Robinson and Lis Smith. Written comments would be fed into the meeting at the appropriate points.

The absence of George Charles was also noted in his role as Chief Finance Officer.

UB1316. Declaration of Interests

There were no other Declarations of Interest in relation to any items on the Agenda.

UB1317. Chair's Announcements

The Chair outlined the schedule for the Board Residential which included: (i) a briefing on UCLan Cyprus; and (ii) a video presentation by the Deans of School, whose

leadership was an important factor in maintaining the resilience of the University, since the academic restructure.

Day two had been designed to facilitate a 'deep dive' into the Strategy, including: (i) a Teams presentation by Vivienne Stern MBE, Chief Executive of UUK, to set the context; (ii) an update by Heather Ellis, Director of Marketing, sharing the outcomes of the recent 'listening lunches'; and (iii) break-out sessions to capitalise on Board Members' expertise in delivering the Strategy Refresh.

UB1318. Reserved and Unreserved Minutes of the University Board Meeting held on 10 April 2025

The Reserved and Unreserved Minutes of the previous meeting held on 10 April 2025 were approved as a correct record, to be signed by the Chair.

UB1319. Matters Arising

There were no Matters Arising that were not covered elsewhere in the Agenda and the Vice-Chancellor's Report.

Several documents had been uploaded to the Board Teams site since the last meeting, including the EDI Annual Report 2023/24 and the revised Instrument and Articles of Government.

UB1320. Vice-Chancellor's Report

The Vice-Chancellor presented his regular report which provided an overview of external factors and challenges for the University and a summary of ongoing internal activities. A copy of the report is set out in the Minute Book.

Reserved Minute – Text Redacted

(i) *Reserved Minute – Text Redacted*

(ii) *Immigration White Paper*

The Immigration White Paper had been published on 12 May 2025, following extensive lobbying by the sector. The implications for higher education providers included: a reduction in the Graduate route visa from 24 to 18 months; an increase in the minimum requirements in the Basic Compliance Assessment (BCA) for metrics relating to visa refusal, enrolment and completion rates; a new RAG rated system to measure BCA compliance; and more stringent requirements relating to English language skills and financial dependencies. The University had already signed up to the Agent Quality Framework.

The Government also intended to explore the introduction of a levy on international student tuition fees of 6%, equating to a cost of circa £5.5m to the University.

Reserved Minute – Text Redacted

With reference to the proposed levy on international tuition fees which had previously been imposed in Australia, the Government was exploring this with a view to making an announcement in the Autumn budget. It was suggested that the money be used to support the sector and skills development, however, universities were already using this income to support a range of activities.

Whilst the changes set out in the White Paper were not as onerous as the sector had anticipated, for example, there were no restrictions on recruiting to MRes programmes, the University would work with the sector to lobby Government where the impacts could be detrimental.

(iii) *Supreme Court Judgement*

The University was working in consultation with the sector to ensure compliance with the Supreme Court ruling which confirmed that 'sex' was defined as biological sex, noting that protections for trans people were still in place. Whilst the Equality Act had always made provision for single sex spaces, these were now based on biological sex. The main areas for the University to consider related to toilet and washing facilities where discussions were ongoing with Estates, and sports where the University would comply with the stance taken by the respective governing bodies.

Mrs Lloyd pointed out that several law firms had published helpful guidance on the implications of the Supreme Court ruling for employers, including Dentons.

(iv) *Reserved Minute – Text Redacted*

(v) *Great Futures Trade Mission*

The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research and Enterprise) had recently attended the Great Futures UK Skills and Chartered Bodies Skills Mission in Riyadh. The focus had been on degree apprenticeships, security, aerospace and health, and the University would continue in its endeavours to engage with BAE Systems in this work.

(vi) *Name Change*

Work was on schedule to transition to the new name of University of Lancashire, ahead of the official launch scheduled for September 2025.

(vii) *University of the Future*

The Curriculum Transformation Project which encompassed a comprehensive portfolio review and transition to block delivery was progressing swiftly, utilising

the sprint methodology. Concurrently, the first phase of pilots related to the Lifelong Learning University Venture had been commenced, offering colleagues the opportunity to undertake one-day, one-credit course elements in sustainability and artificial intelligence on a trial basis.

(viii) *HESA Data Futures*

Significant work had been undertaken to ensure compliance with the HESA Data Futures model, including the implementation of a new governance structure and iterative approach. Delivery milestones were being monitored, with regular reports to the VCG to ensure a timely submission.

(ix) *Artificial Intelligence Strategy*

An Artificial Intelligence (AI) Strategy was being developed to underpin the existing AI Policy and would be presented to the Board in due course. The aim was to promote the responsible use of AI to support students and staff and enhance systems and processes.

(x) *Other Sector Developments*

In other developments across the sector, there were three matters of note, as follows:

- The OfS had published its latest report on the financial sustainability of the sector, which indicated that the financial situation was worsening.
- The Vice-Chancellor of the University of Greater Manchester had been suspended as an interim precautionary measure, pending the outcome of an external investigation.
- An investigation was underway involving the Principal of Burnley College, which would impact the University's evolving relationship with the College.

The Chair thanked Professor Baldwin for the informative overview of developments in the University and the sector. Whilst the new report cover sheet was helpful, it would be useful to include some quantum where impacts had been identified.

Resolved: That the Vice-Chancellor's Report be noted.

UB1321. Reserved Minute – Text Redacted

UB1322. Reserved Minute – Text Redacted

UB1323. Reserved Minute – Text Redacted

UB1324. Reserved Minute – Text Redacted

UB1325. Reserved Minute – Text Redacted

UB1326. Students' Union Report

The President of the Students' Union presented the regular report from the Students' Union, a copy of which is set out in the Minute Book.

Mr Fitzgerald explained that the purpose of the report which would be taken as read, was to provide an update on how the Union's strategic priorities were being implemented and any current issues facing students.

There was a specific focus on the three core missions of: tackling the cost of studying; boosting student wellbeing; and increasing student attainment.

The work to implement the new representative structures, involved a focus on creating communities to increase the sense of belonging for students, and to channel and enhance the impact of the student voice

The Chair thanked Mr Fitzgerald for his informative report, noting how vital it was for the Board to hear the student voice. She hoped that the innovation inspired by Mr Fitzgerald would continue as part of his legacy.

Resolved: That the Students' Union Report be noted.

UB1327. Reserved Minute – Text Redacted

UB1328. Committee Chair's Update

Governance, Risk and Nominations Committee – 17 April 2025

The Chair summarised the substantive items of business considered at the meeting of the Governance Risk and Nominations Committee (GRNC) held on 17 April 2025, including: the revised Audit Committee Terms of Reference, which had since been approved via the Written Resolution procedure; the Value for Money Statement; and the Risk Register, which had been considered under the previous item.

Reserved Minute – Text Redacted

Mrs Lowry observed that the Risk Management Policy required updating to ensure consistency with the revised Audit Committee Terms of Reference in relation to the review of effective risk management.

Resolved: That

- (i) the update from the Chair of the Governance, Risk and Nominations Committee be noted; and
- (ii) the Risk Management Policy be updated to ensure consistency with the revised Audit Committee Terms of Reference.

UB1329. Any Other Business

Mr Lee delivered an update on several governance matters as follows:

- (i) The process to appoint a new University Secretary and General Counsel was underway. Having finalised the Job Description, a search consultant had now been appointed to help identify suitable candidates. The next step was to convene a panel of the Board, comprising the members of the Governance, Risk and Nominations Committee (GRNC), and including the Vice-Chancellor and Deputy Vice-Chancellor.
- (ii) The Board was recommended to approve the extension of the appointments of Miss McCarthy and Mrs Norris as Independent Governors for a final Term of 3 years from 31 August 2025.
- (iii) Dr Gurjee's Term of Office as a Staff Governor was due to expire on 31 July 2025. The process to appoint a new Staff Governor had been initiated in line with the revised Instrument of Government.
- (iv) Mrs Lowry's Term of Office as an Independent Governor was due to expire on 31 July 2025. The process to appoint a new Board Safeguarding Champion and ex-officio member of Academic Board was underway.
- (v) Arrangements to appoint a new Independent Governor with expertise in financial expertise were being progressed under the auspices of the GRNC.

Resolved: That

- (i) the governance update be noted;
- (ii) the process to appoint a new University Secretary and General Counsel be endorsed; and
- (iii) the extension of the appointments of Miss McCarthy and Mrs Norris as Independent Governors for a final Term of 3 years from 31 August 2025, be approved.

UB1330. Date of the Next Meeting

The next meeting was scheduled to take place on 26 June 2025 in the Engineering and Innovation Centre, University of Lancashire, Preston Campus.

F Winters
Deputy Clerk to the Board