

STRICTLY PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL

University of Lancashire

Unreserved Minutes of the University Board Meeting Held on 26 June 2025 at 5.15pm in the Engineering and Innovation Centre, Preston Campus

Present:

Anne McCarthy (Chair)

Graham Baldwin	Ruth Lowry
Jon Baldwin	Lorraine Norris
Jim Carter	Fiona Rayment
Luke Fitzgerald	Khalil Rehman
Richard Frediani	Rachel Robins
Ridwanah Gurjee	Lindsay Robinson
Victoria Hutchinson*	Lis Smith
Lesley Lloyd*	

In attendance:

Lisa Brooks (Governance and Compliance Manager)
George Charles (Chief Finance Officer)
Ruth Connor (Deputy Vice-Chancellor)
Jo Jarvis (Head of Legal Services) – for Item 10
Carolyn Johnson (Executive Officer to the Vice-Chancellor)
Ken Lee (Chief People Officer)
Fiona Winters (Head of Governance/Deputy Clerk to the Board)

UB1331. Welcome and Apologies

The Chair welcomed all present to the last Board meeting of the 2024/25 academic year. She thanked the Vice-Chancellor for steering the University through a significant week, including a busy Open Day, the official opening of the School of Veterinary Medicine, the UKVI re-audit and a special meeting of the Resources Committee.

Apologies for absence had been received from Richard Hext.

UB1332. Declarations of Interest

Professor Baldwin and Mr Charles noted their non-financial interests as Directors of UCLan Cyprus.

UB1333. Chair's Announcements

The Chair announced that:

- (i) Board members had enjoyed a tour showcasing the range of activities undertaken by a team of dedicated technicians to support and prepare students for the world of work. The tour had encompassed the digitally enabled laboratories and degree shows, where the work of two students who had won national awards was on display, including one student with complex inclusivity needs, where it was reported that in addition to her creative and academic achievements, she had found sense of belonging on her course. This demonstrated how the University made a profound difference to the lives of its students.
- (ii) On behalf of the Board, the Governance, Risk and Nominations Committee was seeking to appoint a new independent governor with finance expertise, to ensure continuity as other experienced governors' terms of office came to an end. Members were invited to consult their networks to identify suitable candidates.

UB1334. Reserved and Unreserved Minutes of the University Board Meeting held on 15 May 2025

The Reserved and Unreserved Minutes of the previous meeting held on 15 May 2025 were approved as a correct record, to be signed by the Chair.

UB1335. Matters Arising

There were no Matters Arising that were not covered elsewhere on the Agenda.

UB1336. Vice-Chancellor's Report

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

In summarising his report, Professor Baldwin focused on areas of strategic significance or where there had been further updates since the time of writing, as follows:

- (i) The University continued to achieve great things despite numerous external challenges, including organising the 11th Lancashire Science Festival and preparing to host the forthcoming Graduation Ceremonies.
- (ii) The latest funding challenges included the Office for Students (OfS) Strategic Priorities grant being cut, resulting in a loss of circa £1.1m to the University.
- (iii) Meetings with MPs which had been convened to strengthen the University's engagement in Westminster, had confirmed that the financial plight of the sector was not a current a priority for government. The general view appeared to be that universities needed to enhance productivity, by reviewing their working practices and culture.
- (iv) The Comprehensive Spending Review had reaffirmed the Government's focus on growth, skills, innovation and infrastructure, however, references to universities were limited. Moving forwards, the University would position itself to take advantage of additional funding for research and skills aligned with a new Industrial Strategy and the AI Action Plan which opened opportunities for collaboration across the FE and HE sectors.
- (v) A recent Executive exchange with Liverpool John Moore's University had explored the potential for collaboration, with the aim of enhancing expertise in the areas of environmental sustainability and Artificial Intelligence.
- (vi) It was hoped that the postponed White Paper on Post 16 Education and Skills would include positive plans for tuition fee increases, although these were likely to be offset by reductions in other areas and may generate negative publicity which the sector must be prepared to counter.
- (vii) The challenges presented by the Immigration White Paper included the reduction in the graduate route, which was not as bad as expected, whilst further details were awaited about the proposed international tuition fee levy. The tightening of BCA metrics posed a risk to international recruitment, especially the lowering of the threshold for visa refusal rates to 5%. The University's International Recruitment Strategy was being reviewed, with a view to avoiding countries with elevated visa refusal rates.

- (viii) The prospect of a further decrease in international recruitment and associated income had prompted a review of the 'size and shape' of the University to determine the optimum configuration to achieve breakeven. This was planned to be completed over a period of 15 months.
- (ix) The University continued to receive regular sector updates and had commissioned legal advice to ensure compliance with the Higher Education Freedom of Speech Act that was due to come into effect from 1 August 2025.
- (x) Various regional engagement activities were underway, including hosting a recent meeting of the Preston Regeneration Board which was a collaborative venture between the University and Preston City Council (PCC) and Lancashire County Council (LCC). There had also been a meeting with the new Leader of LCC who indicated that he was impressed by the University.
- (xi) The HESA Data Futures Student Return was progressing well under the new governance arrangements, with the project on track to deliver the first interim milestone in August.
- (xii) *Reserved Minute – Text Redacted.* Elsewhere in People news, a female professor had been appointed as the new Dean of Engineering and Computing, and a strong shortlist of candidates had been selected for interview for the post of University Secretary and General Counsel.
- (xiii) Significant progress was being made with the 'University of the Future' programme, supported by the innovative Changemakers scheme. In recognition of its proactivity in this area, the University had been invited to join a national group to oversee the implementation of the Lifelong Learning Entitlement.
- (xiv) In other academic developments, the role of Achievement Coaches had been re-configured to provide targeted support for students in line with external policy drivers, and the continued focus on retention had resulted in improvements on the previous year.

The Board engaged in a discussion about the Vice-Chancellor's report, and the following points were raised:

- (i) *Reserved Minute – Text Redacted.*
- (ii) Good progress was being made with the 'University of the Future' across the University in general, with three pilot schemes having been completed. It was hoped that the positive modelling in most areas would marginalise some more entrenched and negative perspectives. Dr Gurjee highlighted the good degree of collaboration and the positive impact of the Changemakers in driving change.
- (iii) *Reserved Minute – Text Redacted.*
- (iv) Given that immigration was high on the agenda of all political parties and the likely impact on international student recruitment, the University should be prepared to respond quickly to policy changes. The planned review of 'size and shape' was important in this regard.
- (v) It was timely to promote the value of higher education through critical messaging to increase understanding about the importance of research amongst other things, learning lessons from recent experience in the FE sector and engaging with key stakeholders such as employers, in articulating the benefits of HE.

Professor Baldwin confirmed that alongside the work by UUK to enhance the reputation of universities, the University was developing its own locally focused reputational strategy to promote how its activities could support the achievement of government aims for economic development. It was important in this regard to articulate the benefits of the University to the local area.

- (vi) *Reserved Minute – Text Redacted*

The Chair thanked Professor Baldwin and noted that future reports would include a link to the wide variety of events hosted by the University including conferences, performances and exhibitions. Board members who were interested in attending any of these events, should contact the Governance Team.

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

UB1337. Reserved Minute – Text Redacted

UB1338. Reserved Minute – Text Redacted

UB1339. Reserved Minute – Text Redacted

UB1340. Reserved Minute – Text Redacted

UB1341. Reserved Minute – Text Redacted

UB1342. Students' Union Impact Report

The President of the Students' Union (SU) presented the Annual Report highlighting the work undertaken by the SU during the 2024/25 academic year. A copy of the Report is set out in the Minute Book.

Mr Fitzgerald reported on the extensive range of activities that had been initiated in line with the 4-year strategy and in relation to the three core missions of: tackling the cost of studying; boosting student wellbeing; and increasing student attainment.

A significant number of these activities had been carried out in collaboration with the University, such as the Period Poverty and Claim Your Space Campaigns. The SU continued to endorse Unitu as the key platform for amplifying the student voice, working closely with Student Achievement Services to drive improvements. The new SU representation structures were designed to foster greater ongoing collaboration.

The Board acknowledged Mr Fitzgerald's legacy of innovation and how he had excelled in the role of non-executive Board member, foregrounding the student voice.

The Chair reported that arrangements were in place to interview the four elected SU Representatives, to select a new Student Governor to serve on the Board.

Resolved: that the Students' Union Impact Report and the work undertaken by the Students' Union during 2024/25 be noted.

UB1343. Academic Board Annual Assurance Report

The Vice-Chancellor presented the Academic Board Annual Assurance Report 2024/25, a copy of which is set out in the Minute Book.

Professor Baldwin explained that the Academic Board was responsible for overseeing the implementation of key academic strategies and upholding the quality and standards of all University awards. The Report was designed to provide assurance that the Academic Board had fulfilled the key responsibilities delegated via the Articles of Government. Additionally, two members of the University Board served as ex-officio members of the Academic Board, providing regular reports throughout the year.

Mrs Lowry confirmed that the operation of the Academic Board through various sub-committees was logical and effective, and she had no hesitation in commending the Assurance Report to the University Board. A summary of the matters discussed at the latest meeting held on 18 June 2025 was available to view on the Board Teams site.

Board members noted that it was important to maintain a clear focus on student retention and completion, acknowledging that this was a longstanding challenge for the University given its widening participation mission.

Resolved: That –

- (i) the Academic Board Annual Assurance Report 2024/25 be noted; and
- (ii) the Academic Board and its Sub-Committee had fulfilled the key responsibilities delegated through the Articles of Government.

UB1344. Committee Chair's Updates

Audit Committee – 4 June 2025

Reserved Minute – Text Redacted.

A brief written summary of the meeting was available to view on the Board Teams site, along with the two benchmarking reports on HE risks and financial statements.

Reserved Minute – Text Redacted

UB1345. Any Other Business

Board Appointments

The Chair reported that:

- (i) Following a rigorous interview process, the Governance, Risk and Nominations Committee recommend to the Board the appointment of Mick Cartledge, former Chief Executive of Burnley Council, as a new Independent Governor with effect from 1 September 2025. A copy of Mr Cartledge's application had been posted on the Teams site for Board members to consider.
- (ii) This was Luke Fitzgerald's last Board meeting as his term of office as a Student Governor expired on 30 June 2025. The Board recorded thanks to Mr Fitzgerald for his contribution to the Board over 2 years, particularly his success in foregrounding the student voice.

- (iii) This was Ridwanah Gurjee's last Board meeting as her term of office as a Staff Governor expired on 31 July 2025. The Board recorded thanks to Dr Gurjee for her service over 7 years, particularly the insight she had provided into the work within academic schools.
- (iv) This was Ruth Lowry's last Board meeting as her term of office as an Independent Governor expired on 31 July 2025. The Board recorded thanks Mrs Lowry for her contribution to the Board over 7 years and prior to that her service as a co-opted member of Audit Committee, particularly her role as Chair of the Audit Committee, and in championing the Governance Effectiveness Review.
- (v) Richard Hext's term of office as an Independent Governor was due to end on 31 August 2025. The Board recorded thanks to Mr Hext for his service over 10 years, especially his financial acumen and contribution to the Resources Committee.
- (vi) The relevant processes had been initiated to appoint new Staff and Student Governors and an Independent Governor with expertise in financial matters. Additionally, a new Safeguarding & Prevent Lead and ex-officio member of Academic Board will be appointed from amongst the Board membership.

Insurance Arrangements

It was established that that insurance was in place to indemnify Board members against liability when acting for the University. The Head of Governance undertook to circulate details to all Board members.

Estates Team

The Board wished to convey thanks to the Estates Team as the University's grounds had looked impressive during the opening of the School of Veterinary Medicine.

Resolved: That –

- (i) the update on Board appointments be noted, including the arrangements to appoint new Staff and Student Governors, an Independent Governor with finance expertise, a new Safeguarding & Prevent Lead and ex-officio member of Academic Board; and
- (i) the appointment of Mick Cartledge as a new Independent Governor with effect from 1 September 2025 be approved, subject to due diligence, induction and a probationary period of one year.

UB1346. Date of the Next Meeting

The schedule of Board meetings for 2025/26 had been circulated. The next meeting was due to take place at 5.00pm on 17 September 2025 preceded by a tour, at the Preston Campus.

F Winters
Deputy Clerk to the Board