

HARPER ADAMS UNIVERSITY

Board of Governors

Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Governors held on 26 November 2020 via MS teams

Present:	Mr Peter Nixon	Chair
	Dr David Llewellyn	Vice-Chancellor
	Mr Colin Bailey	
	Dr John Donaldson	Staff Governor
	Mr Richard Hambleton	
	Mrs Yvonne Hawkins	
	Mr Vernon Blakeman	Staff Governor
	Mr Dominic Wong	Vice-Chair
	Mr Thomas Oatey	SU President
	Professor Mark Ormerod	
	Mrs Rebecca Payne	Staff Governor
	Dr Julia Pointon	
	Mrs Christine Snell	
	Mr Martin Thomas	
	Mr Campbell Tweed	
	Mr Stephen Vickers	
	Mrs Debbie Winstanley	
	Mrs Emma Folkes	
	Mr Mark Griffiths	
In Attendance:	Dr Catherine Baxter	University Secretary & Clerk to the Board
	Mrs Liz Furey	Chief Financial Officer
	Professor Michael Lee	Deputy Vice-Chancellor
Observers:	Mrs Marisa Virseda	Board Apprentice
	Ms Adeola Olufayo	Board Apprentice
	Mrs Kate Baker	Deputy University Secretary
	Mrs Doris Taylor	Staff Observer
	Mrs Simone Clarke	Staff Observer
Apologies:	Mrs Sarah Mukherjee	
	Mr Tim Burnhope	
	Dr Tim Watson	

Register of Interests

Members were reminded to complete or update their entry in the Register of Interests as necessary.

20/18 Pre-Board Briefing

Before the meeting, members received a briefing from the Director of Marketing and Communications focusing on the impact of spend on marketing and communications during 2019/20 and plans for 2020/21. Members agreed that the presentation had been very helpful. Members also recognised the challenge and the necessity of the University being flexible in its approach and responding to change, much of which had been rapid during the onset of Covid-19 restrictions. A significant amount of work had been done to create alternative methods of keeping

had risen but this had since steadied and had been at a low level of 2 the previous week. This had grown slightly to 16 at the current time and appropriate measures were being taken to ensure isolation and support continued. The University would be moving online for its educational delivery in accordance with DfE guidance with effect from 7 December 2020. From 4 December 2020 the travel window for students to return home for the Christmas period had been confirmed by the Government. The University had put in place appropriate arrangements to ensure a staggered and safe departure system for students living on campus and was also engaging with students living in the community and providing appropriate advice. While some universities had been chosen to engage with the pilot of lateral flow testing, the University had decided, after careful consideration, not to engage with this but was instead able to offer asymptomatic PCR tests via the Health Protection Hub test centre located on the University's campus.

- ii) that the Government's new tier system would be put in place with effect from 2 December 2020. The latest data showed that up until the 21st November, Telford and Wrekin had 459 Covid positive cases of which 2 related to the students at the University. It was therefore clear that the University's student population was no longer a significant factor in the local area although it continued to monitor the situation carefully;
- iii) that arrangements were being put in place to ensure students who wish to stay on campus or in the local community beyond the Government travel window were supported. Access to the online library, student support, catering, food shopping, IT etc were all being managed;
- iv) that government requirements for students to return in January were not yet confirmed. Universities were asking for an early decision to enable appropriate planning and it was hoped that this would be forthcoming. In the meantime, Kate Baker continued to work closely with the local Health Protection Hub with a view to putting in place arrangements for either lateral flow testing or other asymptomatic testing that may be available from the Health Protection Hub. It was also recognised that the staggered start for students to return to campus may be a possibility and therefore the University was currently looking at the potential impact of this in terms of practical teaching and face-to-face delivery;
- v) that the recently announced financial support measures did not offer much opportunity for the University to gain further funding. The criteria related to a downturn in overseas students where Harper Adams had not seen a significant downturn. The other opportunity was to bid for capital funding where overall student numbers had reduced.

- vii) that communication with students remained a strong requirement from the Office for Students. The regular meetings with Student Services were continuing and these have been much appreciated by students particularly those who were self-isolating. There had been significant help provided by the Students Union and this was particularly

- xiv) that the recent Comprehensive Spending Review announcement had not identified much change for higher education apart from a slight increase in funding for research and emphasis on the importance of intellectual property. It was clear that there would be further funding for further education and apprenticeships together with some changes for levy payers; a UK wide alternative to Erasmus plus; and a new draft free-speech University bill;
- xv) that sincere thanks were due to Mr Andy Jones who would be retiring from the University in mid-January. It was noted that his role would not be replaced directly. Rather, the areas of work would be reshaped and reassigned with a view to making efficiency savings where possible;
- xvi) that there had been a small number of sensitive student disciplinary cases which had been managed and thanks were due to members of the Board for engaging with a recent appeal;
- xvii) that a new lecture series inviting keynote speakers had been successfully launched. Key speakers so far had included the Chair of AHDB, John Shropshire a forthcoming representative of the British Veterinary Association and a speaker talking about rural business support. Engagement from sers 11s a t. a uldive

- xxiii) that the new analysis of universities had been published by the [Go Compare](#) website. This had placed Harper Adams in the top 20 UK universities;
- xxiv) that the collaboration with the Royal Veterinary College and Aberystwyth University had launched supported by the Welsh Assembly Government. Students would spend two years at Aberystwyth and then progress to the RVC. It was understood that there were circa 25 students involved in the programme;
- xxv) that the University was examining the possibility of re-engaging with the furlough scheme under the new rules recently announced. On this occasion however, the University did not intend to top up salaries to 100% and also intended to keep to the scheme rules on monthly limits which may potentially affect a very small number of staff;
- xxvi) that the University, along with many others, had received a letter from the Secretary of State asking that it adopt the working definition of anti-Semitism which had been published by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance. Although some universities had already adopted

importance to maintain an appropriate balance between the core rural market that the University had always served well and new areas including students from urban areas and that there was an important need to appeal to both. It was also the case that the rural deprivation indicators identified a number of urban centres in rural locations as well as conurbations close to rural areas where there was further opportunity to attract students from semi urban or urban areas;

- xxviii) that Members welcomed the RAG rating identified in the report and noted that further information had been uploaded to the Gov Document Library;
- xxix) that Professor Mills was able to confirm that solid progress was being made with preparation of the REF submission. He explained the background to the UK wide system and noted that approximately 52,000 academics had submitted papers

special meeting already arranged for 26 January 2021 when F & G P Committee and the Board would be meeting to consider these items. **LF**

20/24 **Audit and Risk Management Committee**

- Received:
- i) a report on the meeting of the Committee held on 13 November 2020
 - ii) the Annual Report of the Audit and Risk Management Committee for 2019/20 financial year including as annexes the reports of the Internal Auditors and the draft report of the External Auditors;
 - iii) the Value for Money Report 2019/20 and Value for Money Plan for 2020/21 and the Value for Money Strategy.

- Noted:
- i) that the Audit Committee had been pleased to welcome Mrs Virseda as a co-opted Member for the year. Members had also acknowledged the significant amount of work that Kate Baker had done to draw the documentation together for the meeting in November following handover from Dr Baxter;
 - ii) that the Audit Committee had received a helpful briefing on the financial forecast for 2020/21 and 2021/22 and had agreed to recommend to the Board the draft Annual Report and Accounts for Harper Adams University and associated documents as set out later on the agenda. It had also agreed to recommend to the Board approval of the Annual Report and Financial Statements of Cedar Energy Limited and associated documentation and also those of the Development Trust and associated documentation also as set out later on the agenda;
 - iii) that the External Auditors had presented their draft report and it had been hoped that their final report would have been ready in time for the Board meeting. Although the report was almost complete it remained with the KPMG technical team for final checking. The new wording for the Access and Participation opinion had now been received and remained positive. The final determination of going concern was still under discussion although no major issues were anticipated. It was therefore hoped that the final wording would be received shortly for this important element;
 - iv) that the Committee had been content with the Value for Money Strategy, the final report on progress of the Value for Money Plan for 2019/20 and the draft Value for Money Plan for 2020/21 and had decided to recommend these documents to the Board for its approval. The Committee had also considered its draft report and agreed to recommend it to the Board subject to final inclusion of elements of the KPMG External Auditors report once the final version became available. The Committee had been able to present a positive report to the Board and had no major issues to raise;
 - v) the Committee had noted the Internal Auditors Annual Report which was overall very positive. The Internal Auditors had conducted a mock audit review of funding for degree level apprenticeships and had identified a number of areas which needed to be addressed. They had confirmed that this was not unusual as the rules change very regularly and it was very challenging for institutions to remain up-to-date with the requirements. This remained an area of risk for all institutions. The

University was taking active steps to address the recommendations and these would be followed up by the Internal Auditors in due course;

- vi) that members had also considered the University's Risk Management Policy for 2020/21 and the Risk Analysis and Action Plan for 2020/21 including the Risk Appetite Statement and had recommended these to the Board for its approval. They had also considered a detailed report on how COVID risks and planning were being progressed and also on Brexit risks and again recommended these to the Board for approval. A number of risks had been re-rated and details were included on the agenda for with a request that the Board agree these amended risk ratings;
- vii) that the Committee had also considered and completed its Annual Review of Performance of Internal and External Auditors and had agreed to recommend that the Internal Auditors be reappointed for 2020/21. The current External Auditors were not in a position to be reappointed as their tender period was coming to an end and it was necessary therefore for a new external audit tender to be launched with a view to appointing the successful external audit firm to commence their work during 2021 in advance of year end July 2021;

Agreed:

- i) that the Internal Auditors, RSM, be reappointed for the year 2020/21; **CEB**
- ii) that and External Audit tender be launched early in 2021; **LF**
- iii) that the Value for Money Report for 2019/20, Value for Money Plan for 2020/21, and Value for Money Strategy for 2020/21 be approved;
- iv) that the report of the Audit and Risk Management Committee for 2019/20 was accepted and was confirmed as providing the Board with the sufficient assurance subject to final confirmation of the points from the External Auditors final report which had not yet been received;
- v)

- Noted:

- ii) that [REDACTED] had been content to [REDACTED] return for 2019/20 [REDACTED]
has [REDACTED] participated and noted that [REDACTED] briefing received by [REDACTED]
both [REDACTED] and the Board had been [REDACTED] this regard and [REDACTED]
ensured [REDACTED] members were fully briefed and [REDACTED] been no major [REDACTED]
char [REDACTED] is therefore to consider at the [REDACTED] was further [REDACTED]
note [REDACTED] tters of Representation and S [REDACTED] standard as [REDACTED]
draft [REDACTED] were therefore no major issues [REDACTED] to raise;

that [REDACTED] had also [REDACTED] near Investment Point [REDACTED]
had [REDACTED] that the current [REDACTED] minor changes should be [REDACTED]
appro [REDACTED] 0/21; [REDACTED]

the Committee had considered key Performance Indicators presented to the Board. The issues to raise. The performance indicators we00912 0 92 reW*NBTF/c0 d49.6.3(o tETmp grp792

result given the significant challenges relating to COVID. Significant progress had already been made to deliver the necessary efficiency savings and more work was in hand and would be monitored by the Committee over the year. It was also hoped that some staff may be interested in moving to the DC scheme as this could be beneficial for both the individual in terms of cost and for the University should staff wish to make this change;

- vii) that the approach taken was prudent and measured although making the savings would continue to be challenging. The University continued to be very mindful of the importance of continuing with an excellent student experience and maintaining its close connections with industry;
- viii) that strategic developments also continue to be taken forward alongside the detailed work on ensuring delivery of the forecast. Recent examples included an opportunity to work with an industry partner in relation to their new research station and also the significant bid that had been put together to try and secure Salix grant funding to help deliver the University sustainability targets as set out in its Strategic Plan. It was also recognised that sustainability remained key for farm activities and research and teaching. The University had emphasised the importance of working towards net zero and managing its carbon footprint in its strategic plan 2020 – 25 and would also have the opportunity to ensure these areas were covered during its curriculum review which would start in autumn 2021;
- ix) that Professor Lee would be working with Prof Mills on ensuring that sustainable development goals were included in the forward research strategy and work was already taking place in relation to engaging with AHDB carbon management goals for farming;
- x) that lessons learned from COVID 19 included the importance of continuing to develop high-quality virtual engagement with industry partners and prospective students as well as appropriate face-to-face engagement when this was permissible once again. These lessons would also be fed into the curriculum review in 2021 and would help support a blended learning approach which would in turn help to support the University if there were future pandemics or other challenges which needed to be managed in due course;
- xi) that the budget remained challenging and there were necessary cost improving pedagogical developments and ensuring that support was offered to the Students' Union and other key activities during the year;
- xii) that a further benefit to the current blended learning was that significant material was now available on the University's Learning Hub which helped students engage with their learning and return to listen to lectures again as part of their revision. While it was time-consuming for staff to record lectures and develop the closed captions to support the narration it was also recognised that once created such materials it would be relatively easy to update on an annual basis;
- xiii) that it was also clear that prospective students were engaging well with the virtual Open Day and applicants had been well prepared and asked very sensible and challenging questions. Student engagement with the virtual Development Trust Scholarship Fair and the recent virtual scholarship and placement there had also been very positive as had the engagement by employers;

- xiv) that overall, members felt the University had been agile and responsive and had paid appropriate attention to sustainability as well as its responsibilities to staff and students and had managed risks as far as possible;
- xv) the KPIs for 2019/20 and that Document Library in due course.
- xvi) that members were content that as reported by the Finance & General Purposes Committee and Audit and Risk Management Committee the University had demonstrated in its Annual Report and Accounts and appropriate engagement and awareness of the importance of reporting public benefits and the OfS reporting requirements;
- xvii) that members were content that the University's disclosure of its environmental impact as a company was appropriate and noted that this requirement had not yet been put in place for all universities unless they happen to be companies as in the case of Harper Adams University.

Endorsed: the Ethical Investment Policy 2020/21;

Approved: i) the Draft 2019/20 Annual

20/27 **Academic Board, Academic Developments and Annual Assurance Reports on the Management of Quality and Standards**

Received:

- i) a report on the meeting of Academic Board held on 18 November 2020
- ii) the Annual Report of Academic Quality Standards and Student Access and Achievement 2019/20 including a summary of External Examiners Reports for 2019/20

Noted:

- i) that the Academic Board had focused on its last meeting on changes to assessment and delivery as required during the national lockdown. Academic Board had also recognised the large amount of work required to deliver the new blended learning approach while maintaining progress

focusing on the work of their student unions had also provided useful insights.

Agreed:

- i) to commend the new format of the Annual Report on Academic Quality, Standards Student Access and Achievement and to thank the staff who had prepared the very helpful report. Members in particular welcomed the RAG rating and clear summary sections included in the document; **CEB**
- ii) to endorse the Quality Enhancement Action Plan as set out in the report. **SC**

20/28 **Risk Management**

Received:

- i) a summary of proposed changes to the Risk Analysis and Action Plan 2020/21;
- ii) the updated Risk Appetite Statement 2020/21
- iii) the updated Risk Management Policy 2020/21

Noted:

- i) that thanks were due to risk leaders and their teams for reviewing the risks thoroughly over the summer and early autumn. In discussion, members noted that financial risks in relation to the Farm not achieving its budget was already included in the finance risks and that reference to the work of the Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Body was also already included in the detailed RAAP slides. The full RAAP had been uploaded to the Gov Document Library and would be shared with University Executive at its forthcoming meeting subject to any comments by the Board;
- ii) that members were particularly pleased to see the consistent improvement in the work of the Student Union and this had moved forward very positively since the appointment of Mr Oatey and Ms France. Members offered their thanks and congratulations to the President and Vice-President; **TO**
- iii) that although Members were content with the Risk Appetite Statement 2020/21 as set out, it was suggested that it may be helpful to consider reframing it in terms of risk averse, risk limiting, risk accepting. A framework used by Crowe LLP was suggested as particularly helpful to consider as part of for the next review in 2021;

20/29 **Prevent Duty: Annual Accountability Return to the OfS 2019/20**

Received: the Prevent Duty Annual Accountability Return 2020 for Submission to the OfS in December 2020

Noted:

- i) that following the Board's consideration of the Annual Prevent Report at its October meeting, the OfS had published the requirements for the Annual Accountability Return. There had been some changes to the return, in particular, institutions were required to describe how they had responded to any risks arising from COVID 19 and particular information about their welfare arrangements for students rather than including welfare data in the data returns as in previous years;
- ii) that the University continued to deliver its responsibilities with regard to the Prevent Duty and members had no issues or concerns to raise and were content with the Annual Accountability Return as drafted;

Approved: the Prevent Duty Annual Accountability Return 2020.

20/30 **Report of the President of the Students Union**

Received: a report from the Student Union President on the recent activities of the Students Union

Noted:

- i) that the Students Union audited accounts including the Trustees Report, and External Auditors opinion for year ended 31 July 2020 would be circulated when they were available together with responses from the SU Director with respect to any actions arising from the Annual External Audit; **TO**
- ii) that the Student Union had managed to run a successful programme of activity in the bar until the recent lockdown had interrupted these arrangements. The bar would also remain closed during the rest of the term to enable students to return home safely;

iii) the SU had received a surprise COVID inspection 09/12/20 BDC.ow 10.1melfao.e 872 10.02 Tf1

viii)

- vii) that a detailed review of the Farm was underway and thanks were particularly due to Mr Bailey for his work in this regard. Mr Bailey reported that his review of the Farm information to date had confirmed that the Farm was mid-

code of HEI governance in full;

- ii) that the Board would in future receive an annual report drawing together the various equality and diversity reports already presented to Staffing Committee and other Committees during the year;
- iii) that as part of the summary text box or executive summaries provided at the beginning of Board committee papers where a decision is required, the author of the paper will in future be asked to indicate whether or not in their view the decisions requested have any equality, diversity, inclusion issues or risks associated with them; **CEB**
- iv) that where the Board or Committee is asked to approve a new amended policy, the author would need to confirm that an equality impact assessment has been conducted and advise whether or not any issues have been identified and addressed; **CEB**

NB. Prior to discussion of the next point, members agreed that they did not need to ask the Chair or Vice-Chair to depart from the meeting as all members had reviewed the proposal sent prior to the meeting and no one had any objections. The Chair & Vice-Chair did not join in the discussion.

- v) that members were content that there was no requirement at the current time for a Senior Independent Governor to be appointed as a sounding board. Members confirmed that they had considered the reasons set out for this proposal and felt that there was no need to consider the matter further at this time as members were content with the current arrangements and confirmed that there are sufficient opportunities for members to raise any concerns about the conduct of the Chair or the Vice-Chair or to raise any other issues if they wish to do so. It was further agreed that as suggested, the matter would be considered on an annual basis as part of the annual re-election of the Chair and Vice-chair; **CEB**
- vi) that the Effectiveness Review interval would be revised from 4 years to 3 years;
- vii) that the revised Statement of Primary Responsibility circulated to Members prior to the meeting should be adopted as set out. This would not include reference to the phrase 'with the Executive' in section 1 as Members agreed that this was not consistent with the University's constitutional arrangements which clearly state that the Board cannot delegate the determination of the educational character, mission and corporate plans of the universities of the University; **CEB**
- viii) that members were in agreement with the proposal to consolidate the Code of Conduct and Roles and Responsibilities of Governors and to refresh these so that they remained up-to-date and fully reflect the new code. These would be included in the Governors Handbook and circulated to all members for information as set out in the papers circulated to members prior to the meeting; **CEB**
- ix) that there were a number of minor formatting and nomenclature changes to the Articles of Association and Instrument Articles of Government which needed to be updated these included:

- amend reference to Academic Staff Governors to read Staff Governors
- ensure font of all text is consistent and adjust numbering where it is also inconsistent;
- all references to Chair and Deputy Chair to read Chair and Vice-Chair of the Board of Governors with the exception of Deputy Chair of A

