



Minutes Meeting of the University Executive Board

- Date:** 30 January 2024
- Present:** Professor K Lamberts (KL), in the Chair
Professor A Blom (AB), Professor J Derrick (JD), Professor S Fitzmaurice (SF), Professor G Jewell, Professor C O’Bradaigh (CO), R Sykes (RS), (items 1-7), Professor C Watkins (CW), I Wright (IW)
- Secretary:** D Swinn (DS)
- In attendance:** J Strachan (JS), T Wray (TW), V Jackson (VEJ); B Abrams (BA) and A Clune (AC) (item 1); S Finlay (SF), M Hannah (MH) and S Whitehouse (SW) (item 2)
- Apologies:** Professor S Hartley (SH), J Jones (JJ), Professor M Vincent (MV)

1. **Approach for the data changes to support the new schools**

(BA and AC in attendance for this item)

- 1.1 UEB considered paper setting out options and a recommended approach as to how the University should recode its modules and programmes within core IT systems in order to reflect the Schools structure, whilst prioritising the student experience and avoiding or mitigating broader related risks. UEB also affirmed its previous decision that any new structure should be represented in the University’s information systems at Faculty and School level only, with no sub-school units. It was noted that work to reflect the changes in the structure of the Faculty of Health had informed an assessment of dependencies and would continue to do so.
- 1.2 During discussion, UEB noted the evaluation of each option as set out in the related paper, including strengths and weaknesses and risks and benefits. Specifically, the recommended option had been identified as facilitating the achievement of a minimum necessary outcome that was realistically deliverable, with additional work over a longer timeframe to supplement these core fundamentals. Further clarification was provided about the barriers to achieving what would be the ideal solution, such that the attendant risks of failure were unacceptably high. It was also noted that the longer term work proposed under the recommended option would balance the continuation of business as usual with technical changes and would facilitate greater flexibility and agility in the medium term. In turn, this would inform future strategic consideration of the University’s IT student systems.
- 1.3 Following discussion, UEB approved the recommendation to implement Option 2, as set out in the related paper, noting that, although this would delay the full representation of the

new Schools, it significantly reduced risks to both implementation timescales and student processes and could be achieved with moderate additional costs.

2. **Technical Career Pathway**

(SF, MH and SW in attendance for this item)

- 2.1 UEB considered a paper proposing the introduction of a new Technical Career Route in the University and plans for this to be launched in March 2024. UEB noted a series of additional recommendations for future work related to technical careers, representation, development and talent attraction, all of which were to be explored further by the Technical Leadership Group. It was noted that, whilst there had been a range of activity to increase the sense of satisfaction amongst technical colleagues, the proposed new pathway represented a step change in the University offer, alongside those other initiatives. The extent of consultation and engagement that had been undertaken to inform this development was commended, and UEB noted the benefits not only to career development and progressions but also in supporting talent attraction and retention for a key group of staff.
- 2.2 With respect to the grade profiles and standardised titles, clarification was provided that these reflected the current distribution of roles across grades but would not preclude development opportunities at a higher grade. This was explained in a related FAQs webpage and it was also noted that consideration of development at higher grades would be undertaken through a broader workstream
- 2.3 Following discussion, in which Members commended the project team for their work, UEB approved the Technical Career Route and the plans to launch it in March 2024, including a showcase at TechNet, and noted the additional work to be developed further by the Technical Leadership Group.

3. **Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom**

- 3.1 UEB discussed the proposed University Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom, which had been developed through a working group, the broader Freedom of Speech Group and with detailed input from the University's legal advisers. The Code had also been noted at Senate's 13 December 2023 meeting following a separate briefing session. The new Code was required in response to the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act, which placed new duties on universities, colleges and their students' unions, and gave the OfS an enhanced role in promoting free speech. It was confirmed that the final version of the Code had been checked to ensure that it was compliant with the new legislation and had been future-proofed as far as possible, although further amendments may be necessary as the OfS developed its regulations in this area. UEB recognised that this was a highly complex area of law with several interconnected and overlapping duties to be balanced. However, UEB was pleased to note the extent of work undertaken by the

University to date, which left it well placed to respond to the new legal and regulatory duties.

- 3.2 During discussion, clarification was provided about the new statutory provisions and the limited circumstances in which universities may be able to recoup the costs of security for hosting certain events. A proposal to nominate a member of Council, who also sat on UEB, as Council's Free Speech Champion was also noted, given Council's role in overseeing and monitoring compliance in this area. It was also recognised that there were a number of related institutional policies that would need to be reviewed and updated to reflect the new legal provisions and those of the University's Code of Practice, some of which would need to involve the campus Trade Unions where they related to terms and conditions of employment. The need to ensure that relevant colleagues were aware of and sufficiently understood the new provisions and related internal policies and procedures was also noted.
- 3.3 UEB agreed to recommend the Code of Practice to Council for approval, subject to amending references to "concerns" about freedom of speech to "complaints", and to propose a new Council Free Speech Champion.

4. **Potential dates for new UEB Strategic Meetings**

- 4.1. Having recently decided to introduce a change to the UEB meeting cycle, whereby every third meeting would be reserved for fewer but longer discussion based items, UEB approved the proposed dates on which these meetings would be scheduled, and discussed plans to communicate the change to key stakeholders.
- 4.2 UEB discussed the format of these meetings and the merits of facilitating some discussion for only UEB members, whilst recognising that there would be others where senior professional service expertise was required both to inform the discussion and to facilitate the refinement of formal proposals for decision by UEB at a subsequent business meeting. It was agreed to consider each item on a case by case basis.

5. **Round Table**

5.1 **Closed Minute and Paper**

5.2 **Other Matters**

- (a) Media Coverage: UEB discussed the 28 January Sunday Times story about University admissions. It was also noted that the University's Foundation Year for non-traditional entrants, offered through DLL, had received positive coverage. Attention was also drawn to the range of follow-up activity that had and would be taking place since the article was published, including work through both the Russell Group and UUK. However, articles such as this one added to the external challenges facing the sector and reinforced adverse political rhetoric.

- (b) South Yorkshire Mayoral Economic Advisory Council: KL reported that the inaugural meeting had taken place on 29 January and provided an overview of the group's membership and purpose. It was noted that initial discussions had been very positive.
- (c) UEB-HoDs: JD reported that the agenda for the 5 February meeting was in development and would be shared in due course.
- (d) AMRC-TC: GJ reported that McLaren had donated a F1 car for display in the Training Centre and Members were invited to attend the unveiling on 5 February.
- (e) National Day of Action: IW reported that a National Day of Action in solidarity with Palestine was being organised for 7 February, with the risk of protests on campus. Security Services were monitoring the situation.
- (f) Director of EFM: It was reported that the appointment of a permanent Director of EFM was being finalised and further updates and announcements would follow.
- (g) Provost & Deputy Vice-Chancellor: It was reported that the appointment of a P & DVC was being finalised and further updates and announcements would follow.