



Minutes University Executive Board

Date: 28 November 2023

Present: Professor K Lamberts (KL) (in the Chair),
Professor A Blom (AB), Professor J Derrick (JD),
Professor S Fitzmaurice (SF), Professor S Hartley (SH), J Jones (JJ),
Professor C O' Bradaigh (CB), R Sykes (RS), Professor G Valentine
(GV), Professor M Vincent (MV), Professor C Watkins (CW)

In attendance: J Strachan (JS), T Wray (TW), E Hartley (EH) (Items 1-3), Y Knight (YK)
(Item 6), V Jackson (VEJ) (Item 8)

Apologies: Professor G Jewell (GJ)

Secretary: Dr E Smith

1. Report of the UEB Strategic Advisory Group – Student Recruitment and Population (SAG SRP)

(EH in attendance for this item)

1.1 UEB received and approved the report, including the recommendations for:

1.1.1 Student Intake Target Setting 2024/25 (see Minute 2, below).

1.1.2 Approval of Tuition Fees for Postgraduate Taught Home Continuing Students.

1.1.3 Taught Student Reassessment Fees.

1.2 UEB also noted updates across a range of activities concerning SRMA and GE strategic recruitment priorities and activities and the ongoing portfolio review.

2. UEB Student Intake Target Changes for 2024/25 Onward

(EH in attendance for this item)

2.1 Further to the report from the Strategic Advisory Group (Minute 1, above), UEB held a separate discussion about student intake changes with effect from 2024/25. This formed part of SAG SRP's annual review of targets, taking into account recruitment outcomes and horizon scanning of the broader market landscape. Prior to their proposal to UEB, the changes had been considered and endorsed at SAG SRP and had received wider support from colleagues in SRMA, GE, and SPC. The related paper also detailed the impact of the changes on the 2026/27 student population target ranges and the next steps to be taken subject to UEB's approval of the proposals.

2.2 During discussion, UEB raised and/or noted the following points:

- 2.2.1 The proposed intake target changes were not yet reflected in the latest financial forecast. Close attention would need to be paid to the potential impacts on the University's objectives and KPIs.
- 2.2.2 It would be important to align the intake changes with the work to transition to the New School Structure.
- 2.2.3 Schools would still be encouraged to overrecruit to programmes if the opportunities arose and there was strategic merit to doing so. As Members of SAG SRP, each of the FDOs had supported this message.
- 2.2.4 Sector peers had tended to hold tuition fees. However, there was recognition of market sensitivity in relation to PGTH and PGTO recruitment in particular, and the tuition fee position relative to peers differed according to programme and discipline.
- 2.2.5 It would be desirable in due course to develop a process for managing programmes with consistent low recruitment.
- 2.2.6 There would be value at the upcoming UEB Away Day in discussing further the PGTH and PGTO markets and potential market opportunities.

2.3 UEB approved:

- 2.3.1 The student intake target changes for 2024/25 onwards.
- 2.3.2 Changes to the student population target ranges, as endorsed at SAG SRP.

3. **Strategic Objectives for the Student Population (PT, Foundation Year, and Articulation Agreement)**

(EH in attendance for this item)

- 3.1 UEB considered and agreed the proposed approach for developing strategic objectives for the Part-Time, Foundation Year, and Certificates/Diplomas of Higher Education constituents of the wider student population. This followed UEB's initial approval of strategic objectives for each of the six main student cohorts in 2021 and subsequent work on confirming objectives for apprenticeships and online learning/short courses in 2021/22 and 2022/23. Clarification was provided that Articulation Agreements, which were due to be considered as part of this tranche of work, would form a separate paper that would be presented to UEB in due course.

4. **Closed Minute and Paper**

5. **Update on the Research and Innovation Pillars**

- 5.1 UEB considered an update on the Research and Innovation Strategic Pillars, with particular focus on performance relative to the relevant KPIs (KPI1: Research Excellence, KPI2: Research Income, KPI3: PGR Student Experience, and KPI4: Knowledge Exchange).
- 5.2 UEB noted the update and agreed both the proposed update to KPI4 and the modification to the focus in the Innovation Strategic Delivery Plan.

6. **Regional Engagement Strategy Refresh**

(YK in attendance for this item)

- 6.1 UEB considered an update on the Regional Engagement Strategy, which formed a central part of the Innovation Strategic Pillar.
- 6.2 The following points were raised and/or noted in discussion:
 - 6.2.1 The faculty opportunities in the related paper were cast over the long term, but a shorter-term forward look for each faculty was captured in the Innovation Strategic Delivery Plan.
 - 6.2.2 There was scope to raise the profile of Made Together with staff and socialise it within the University so that its assets would be more available/
 - 6.2.3 It was opportune for the University both to be more active in promoting its brand and be clearer in articulating the benefits it wished to realise from regional partnerships and collaborations.
 - 6.2.4 The University would also need to decide the extent to which its regional activities would be informed by the Council's City Goals, an update on which would be presented to UEB in due course.
 - 6.2.5 Particular areas of interest to the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority
- 6.3 UEB approved the refreshed Regional Engagement Strategy, noting the direction of travel was positive, and endorsed the proposal for an annual update to be presented to UEB.

7. **Closed Minute and Paper**

8. **Quarterly Financial Results to 31 October 2023**

(VEJ in attendance for this item)

- 8.1 UEB received and noted the financial results for the University for the three months ended 31 October 2023 and the related detailed presentation, which compared the results with the budget approved in July 2023. Members observed the following headlines:
 - 8.1.1 An underlying operating surplus for the reporting period.
 - 8.1.2 A total operating surplus for the full-year, which was largely attributable to the release of the USS pension deficit provision.
 - 8.1.3 Cash generated from operating activities across the full year.
 - 8.1.4 Overall capital expenditure.
 - 8.1.5 Cash balances.
 - 8.1.6 In both the previous three months and full year, the University would remain in full compliance with its bank covenants and the USS Debt Monitoring Metrics.

9. **USS Valuation – Consultation on the USS Schedule of Contributions Arising from the 2023 Valuation**

- 9.1 UEB received and noted an update on the broader USS valuation process and funding position and considered the institutional response to USS Trustees'

consultation on the draft Schedule of Contributions arising from the 2023 Valuation. The current plan, subject to consultation responses, was that USS would implement lower contribution rates from January 2024 and the revised benefit structure from April 2024. Indications from the University's member consultation indicated overwhelming support for the proposed reinstatement of pre-April 2022 benefits. It was highlighted that the USS Trustee would launch its next employer consultation, on a new Valuation Investment Strategy, in 2024, and UEB would be updated at the appropriate time.

9.2 During discussion, UEB noted that the current valuation for the University of Sheffield Pension Scheme (USPS), which was offered to all staff up to and including Grade 6, was scheduled to conclude in June 2024.

9.3 UEB:

9.3.1 Approved the University's response to the Schedule of Contributions Consultation.

9.3.2 Noted the update on other aspects of the valuation.

10. **Round Table**

10.1 New School Structure: KL reported on Council's recent discussions regarding the form of the advice it would like to receive from Senate on the proposal to adopt the New School Structure. In addition to substantial discussion at Senate's next meeting on 13 December, Senators would be invited to complete a questionnaire to share their views with Council on the proposals. Council had also determined to meet in December, as planned, to discuss the advice received to date and hold a further meeting on 24 January 2024 to consider the formal decision and take into account questionnaire responses. Communications would need to be prepared to send to Members of Senate and the matter would also be raised at the next meeting of UEB-HoDs.

10.2 Appointment Process for Heads of School: UEB agreed the proposed process for appointing Heads of School.

10.3 Leadership Workstream: UEB agreed the proposed Leadership Workstream.

10.4 Transatlantic Net Zero Flight: KL updated UEB on national coverage of Virgin Atlantic's transatlantic flight using sustainable aviation fuel. The Sustainable Aviation Fuel Innovation Centre (SAF-IC) had been involved in preparations for this landmark event.

10.5 N8 Event: KL provided an update on the University's positive reception at the event for its work in support of regional innovation.

10.6 Governance Review: MV informed UEB that Halpin had been appointed to oversee the independent review of the University's governance mechanisms and would report on its findings later in 2023/24.