

the
GOVERNING BODY

**MINUTES of the Governing Body Business Meeting held on Tuesday,
23 April 2024 in room 010, Queen Anne Court, Greenwich Campus, Park Row, Greenwich
SE10 9LS and via Microsoft Teams, held at 15:00-16.30 and 17:00-19:00**

Present:

Ms B Hill CBE (Chair)	Mr C McWilliam
Mr A Baral	Mr M Orr
Professor B Boag	Ms J Seehra-Pearce
Ms P Coles	Mr A Sharma (via Teams)
Professor J Harrington (Vice-Chancellor & CEO)	Dr S Sweeney
Mr R Hicks	Ms E Sideris (via Teams)
Ms T King	

In attendance:

Ms R Ashton (Executive Director, Student & Academic Services)(Item 23/48)
Mrs T Brighton (Governance Support Manager)(minutes)
Mr C Forster (Executive Director of Estates & Facilities)(Item 23/39)
Mr P Garrod (University Secretary)
Ms H King (Executive Director, Marketing & External Relations (Item 23/44))
Professor V Lemm (Deputy Vice-Chancellor & Provost)
Dr S Lewis (Executive Director of Strategic Planning)(Item 23/50)
Ms C Matthews (Director, UK Access, Recruitment & Admissions)(Item 23/47)
Professor D Moore (PVC: Faculty of Education, Health & Human Sciences (Item 23/47))
Mr P Taylor (Chief Operating Officer)
Mr L Thomas (Senior Project Manager)(Item 23/39)
Ms L Watson (Chief Financial Officer)
Professor A Westby (Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research & Knowledge Exchange))
Mr J Dean, External Project Manager, Enborne (Item 23/39)
Mr P Mitchell, Fanshawe Consultants (Item 23/39)

Apologies for Absence:

Mr R Patel
Mr S Saluja

BUSINESS MEETING PART 1

GB 23/38 WELCOME, APOLOGIES, ANNOUNCEMENTS, ITEMS FROM THE CHAIR

The Chair welcomed Professor Vanessa Lemm to her first meeting following her appointment as Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Provost.

The Chair stated that the first part of the meeting would be spent considering the business case for Devonport House. The vision and rationale for the redevelopment and the importance of the project for achieving the University's 2030 strategic ambitions would be revisited. The Consultants from Enborne and Fanshawe were attending to respond to questions.

Mr Chris Forster, Executive Director of Estates & Facilities, attended for this item.

The Governing Body received presentations setting out the vision and rationale for the Devonport House project in the context of the University's 2030 strategy and outlining the formal business case, which incorporated the following appendices:

- Appendix A – RIBA Stage 2 Report Executive Summary – Concept Design
- Appendix B – 907 Devonport Financial Model
- Appendix C – 907 Devonport Cost Report RIBA 2
- Appendix D – Benchmarking of other HE Projects
- Appendix E – 907 Devonport Stage 3 Strategic Programme
- Appendix F – Devonport Risk Register.

The Vice-Chancellor recapped the principal components of the "This is Our Time" strategy which facilitated growth and the provision of modern learning and teaching facilities. Sitting below this strategy, the Estates enabling strategy was specifically driven by growth in student numbers, the need to connect campuses and the provision of stimulating, inclusive and quality space.

As the University's largest campus, Greenwich had the most potential for expansion and its London location particularly attracted international students. However, space was a key constraint and the redevelopment of Devonport House (previously a De Vere hotel and conference centre) provided the opportunity to increase teaching space and provide more modern facilities. Other key aims were to:

- enable the Greenwich campus to be better connected and have a more campus like feel;
- enable the Business School to relocate into modern premises and pave the way for Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) accreditation;
- provide a "front door" for the University and the Business School
- strengthen the University's presence in the local community and create a vibrant public space.

The business case specified how the development of Devonport House was critical to the achievement of the University's strategic priorities. Rebuilding the former conference centre and refurbishing the listed building (ie the former nursing home) would provide 8,733m² of space, 3,200 teaching spaces and 23 teaching rooms. The proposals included a café, a central reception area, 150 and 90 seat lecture theatres with flexible space, specialist space for the Business School including a trading floor and digital marketing suite, and modern Technology and Enhanced Learning Spaces (classrooms with the technology infrastructure to enable the delivery of modern teaching). Opening of the building was planned for September 2027.

The Executive Director of Estates & Facilities reported that re-utilising Devonport House and the conference centre had not proved to be a viable option as it could not provide the modern, flexible teaching space needed. Challenges to re-developing the centre and associated improvements to Devonport House were Grade 2 listed building status, proximity of a UNESCO World Heritage Site and being in the Greenwich Conservation Area. Part of the site was a former burial ground and there had been some exhumation of bodies in the past. The business case addressed and set out mitigation for these and other key challenges.

The project was currently at RIBA Stage 3 (Spatial Coordination). Key appointments made via appropriate procurement frameworks were: Fanshawe as

Cost Consultants, Enborne Project and Development Management as Project Managers, and Stride Treglown as Architects. Appointment of the main “design and build” contractor was scheduled for summer 2024.

There had been extensive consultation with the Royal Borough of Greenwich’s planning officers, local neighbours, partners and with the UNESCO World Heritage Site committee on the size and scale of the development. The masterplanning process had considered the site’s external landscaping, re-balancing of the flow of students around the Greenwich campus, shared access for public and students and biodiversity for the green spaces.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

In considering the business case, the following points were discussed:

[REDACTED]

- Project benchmarking of professional fees and the cost/sqm against previous projects (Stockwell Street and the Dreadnought Building) had been undertaken.
- Consideration had been given to ensuring that the building was energy efficient and sustainable. Installation of solar panels and air source heat pumps was planned in order to help meet the 2030 net zero target.
- The need to ensure that Business School students based at Devonport House were fully integrated and did not lose their sense of belonging to the University.
- There were no plans to acquire additional accommodation for the growing student population at Greenwich, but the University would work closely with private providers in the area or provide more affordable accommodation at the Avery Hill student village.

- In relation to the Vice-Chancellor's recent video newsletter to staff about the financial outlook and need to take action, the Vice-Chancellor advised that development of this type was crucial to strategic growth and the student experience.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

The Governing Body agreed that the project provided a unique and exciting opportunity to support the University's long-term strategy. It was grateful for the thorough work undertaken by the executive and the estates team in enabling the project to reach this point. The project was a significant undertaking, with risks, but it made strategic sense. The Governing Body would maintain high level monitoring as the project progressed.

As recommended by the Finance Committee, the Governing Body formally **approved** the business case for the development of Devonport House at a cost of [REDACTED]

The meeting closed at 16:40 for a short break.

BUSINESS MEETING PART 2

The meeting resumed at 17:00.

GB 23/40 DECLARATIONS OF CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

No declarations of conflict of interests were made.

GB 23/41 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING AND ACTIONS (GB 23/P67)

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 February 2024 were approved. The actions tracker was received.

The Governing Body received the regular report from the Vice-Chancellor on recent developments:

- **Update on Student Success KPIs:** The DVC and Provost had introduced a new Faculty and School "Student Success Plans on a Page" which would set out annual targets, desired outcomes and a programme of activities for each student success metric. This would build on the approach taken in the NSS taskforce, extending it to all the key metrics. Internal stakeholder groups were being established to implement programmes of activities underpinned by data analysis for each metric. Some 'quick wins' and accelerated interventions for each metric were being progressed whilst more tailored interventions for all four metrics were being identified. This work was closely linked to the Access and Participation Plan, which highlighted the intersectionality of issues and helped to inform interventions. The Governing Body was assured that this process would facilitate clear oversight of all activities and enable more effective monitoring.

The Chair noted the Governing Body's concern about progress in some areas.

[REDACTED]

The Vice-Chancellor reported that the BAME Awarding Gap had improved in two Faculties but had worsened in the other two. The matter was complex and the reasons for under-performance needed to be better understood. Noting that data on the BAME Awarding Gap was only available annually and that the Student Success Plans on a Page would not be completed by the next meeting, it was **agreed** that an update on this work would be provided in June, with a more substantive report illustrating tangible evidence of the work presented to the autumn meeting.

- **Senior Staff Appointments:** Professor Vanessa Lemm had taken up post as the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Provost on 1 March 2024. She would continue to lead the Faculty of Liberal Arts & Sciences whilst recruitment for a new Pro Vice-Chancellor and Executive Dean took place. The new Associate Director of Greenwich Online, Amy Sampson, had now joined the University and the new Director of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, Oyebanji (Banji) Adewumi, MBE, was due to start on 10 June 2024.
- **Migration Advisory Committee Review (MAC):** The Migration Advisory Committee, which was undertaking the review of the Graduate route visa, was due to report in May. Changes to the graduate route could have damaging effects on the sector's finances and all major higher education bodies were conveying their concerns to the Committee. The University had planned mitigation.
- **Canary Wharf:** Mr Orr asked whether the possible change of use of Canary Wharf buildings to academic use by American universities was a threat or an opportunity. The Vice-Chancellor reported that many universities had a presence in London, but not all were flourishing. Opportunities could arise and the executive would closely monitor the situation.

The Student Governor presented his report summarising the GSU's recent work in relation to Officer elections, the Retention Calling Project, the BAME Awarding Gap Project, Programme Representation and student society events:

- 37 candidates had run in the recent Officer elections in March. A total of 5,225 votes had been cast representing a 16% increase from 2023. The new Officer team, Ameen Chowdhury (President), Aminul Fahad, Sadiq Lawal and Amrutha Srivashini, start their induction training in June.

- Together with the Inclusivity Consultants, the GSU was delivering the BAME Awarding Gap project. Current key findings from the focus groups and module reviews indicated students' desire for more diverse teaching staff and the opportunity to discuss their own lived experiences.
- There had been excellent engagement from Greenwich students in recent events held in the last month. 196 students had participated in the Varsity games against London South Bank University with 2000 spectators in attendance. Over 700 students had attended the annual Iftar event as part of Ramadan and several hundred had celebrated the Holi, the festival of colours across the three campuses. The Governing Body congratulated Team Greenwich on their victory in the Varsity event.

The Governors noted the importance of the Retention Calling Project and asked about any changing trends in causes of disengagement. The President agreed to take the query away and provide a response in the next report.

In response to a question about whether the election manifestos identified new issues of importance to students, the Vice-Chancellor reported that the executive had regular discussions with the President and officer team. Common issues were employability, support for international students, Medway buses and faith spaces. A partnership board where these themes could be considered more formally was being reinstated.

The Governing Body noted that this was the last meeting which Anuj Baral would be able to attend and expressed its appreciation for his work as GSU President and also his team.

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GB 23/47 ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION (GB 23/P75)

Professor Derek Moore (PVC FEHHS) and Ms Claire Matthews (Director of UK Access, Recruitment and Admissions) gave a presentation on Access and Participation (APP) and preparation of the University's new Access and

Participation Plan. The University was required as part of its OfS registration to have an approved Plan which set out how it planned to improve equality of opportunity for under-represented groups to access, succeed in and progress from higher education.

The Governing Body was advised that the current Plan was due to expire in September 2025 and a replacement Plan was under development. The Plan applied only to home students with a specific focus on under-represented groups specified by the OfS. It detailed all the interventions that would be used to support these groups over the five-year period, 2025-2029, as well as addressing risks identified by the University. Widespread consultation and considerable analysis of data and project work had been undertaken. Clearer theories of change had been created for the overall approach and for each individual intervention to help identify how a project would produce results. The new evaluation centre being established would be central to understanding impact.

Greenwich University has higher proportions of under-represented groups than many other institutions. Progress on “Continuation” for most underrepresented groups had been made since the start of the last Plan. However, real challenges remained particularly in closing the gap on “good degrees” and “employability and further study” by ethnicity and for students from deprived areas.

In response to questioning, the Governing Body was advised that the review of the OfS was unlikely to change the requirement for universities to produce Access and Participation Plans. Whilst the OfS provided guidance on their content, universities retained the ability to define their own strategies and the recent work had not indicated that the University needed to change its activities.

When the final Plan was submitted to the Governing Body’s meeting in June for approval, the Chair asked that the presentation provide Governors with an understanding of the internal framework for evaluation and assurance. It was important to understand whether initiatives were yielding results and how the Plan helped to achieve strategic ambitions and our targets for Student Success.

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor reported that the work under the Plan needed to align with the Student Success sub-strategy and projects needed to be effective, impactful, scalable and targeted to specific groups. In future, development of the Plan would sit under the governance of the Student Success Board. The Vice-Chancellor reported that there was some lag in the data on interventions but evaluating projects and outcomes was complex. Evaluation, which was currently a key priority for the OfS, had been a problem across the sector and had not been a feature of previous plans.

The Chair thanked Professor Moore and Ms Matthews for overseeing this important area of work and looked forward to a fuller presentation at the June meeting when the final version of the 2025/26-2028/29 Plan would be submitted for approval prior to submission to the OfS by the end of July.

Post-Meeting Note: Following the meeting, the Vice-Chancellor clarified in writing to Governors a statement made in discussion that the last Access and Participation Plan had not considered the BAME Awarding Gap.

“ We stated that last time the APP had not considered the BAME awarding gap. We did have a target last time set by the OfS and a trajectory to reduce the gap that we tracked against a predicted trajectory. We were able to show the OfS that we improved and were on track against this agreed target. However, this position changed following Covid, and we revised this for the variation submission which is why we are now also including it as you would expect in our future submission. The confusion arose as it had been removed as a risk [the OfS removed the annual reporting and monitoring requirement] but was then added in again.”

This will now be part of the APP submission but will also inform the work led by the DVC and Provost which we will be able to report regularly to you.”

GB 23/48 STUDENT CASEWORK 2022/23 (GB 23/P75)

Rachel Ashton, Executive Director, Student & Academic Services (SAS), attended for this item.

The Executive Director, SAS, presented an overview of the University’s student casework in 2022/23, including complaints to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA). The volume of casework had been rising year on year and this trend had continued. The University had issued 395 ‘Completion of Procedures’ letters to close casework in 2023, which represented a 36% increase. Formal complaints and academic appeal cases had significantly increased but Fitness to Practise and disciplinary cases had fallen. Greenwich student cases concluded by the OIA had increased to 59, of which two had been upheld and one had been partially upheld.

The Governing Body discussed the rise in complaints and its causes. It was reported that students who had been unsuccessful in the extenuating circumstances process or who had been withdrawn for not registering in time had used the complaint system to pursue their issues. Implementation of the new Student Digital Centre and the casework facility on the Student Lifecycle Management system would help to ensure that students did not need to use the complaints system in this way.

There had been a large increase in complaints across the sector. The University was working with the GSU to build resilience and encourage students to engage in dialogue for the resolution of issues before submitting formal complaints.

The Governing Body thanked the Executive Director for her presentation and noted the continuing improvements to the casework processes which were being put in place.

GB 23/49 CHAIR SUCCESSION (GB 23/P77)

The Governing Body received a report setting out the process and timeline approved by the Nominations, Staffing and Governance Committee for appointing a new Chair of the Governing Body. The current Chair, Bronwyn Hill, was due to finish her final term as Chair and as a Governor in August 2025, and the recruitment of her successor was under way. In accordance with the Procedure for Appointing the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body, it had been determined that the process would be conducted internally, through a call for expression of interest from Independent Governors. This would be circulated after the Governing Body meeting followed by applicant interviews. A recommendation for appointment would be brought to the June meeting. The new Chair would succeed the current Chair on 1 September 2024.

The Governing Body **approved** a revised role description for the Chair on the recommendation of the Nominations, Staffing and Governance Committee.

GB 23/50 STRATEGIC KPIS (GB 23/P78)

Dr Simon Lewis, Executive Director of Strategic Planning, attended for this item. The Executive Director of Strategic Planning reported that the targets and KPIS for Continuation and the BAME Awarding Gap had been reviewed, in response to changes to data definitions and methodologies by the Office for Students (OfS).

Following the review of the **BAME Awarding Gap** KPI, it had been discovered that the OfS had made an error in issuing the original data and had consequently had to re-issue all the sector data. As a result, no amendments were being proposed to the strategy-end targets or the milestones for this KPI.

With regard to the **Continuation** KPI, following the change by the OfS to the census date at which point students were classified as discontinuing, there had had been a reduction in continuation rates across the sector. Greenwich's Continuation rate was estimated to have fallen by 1.5% and the strategy-end target and milestones had been revised downwards to ensure that they were achievable.

The Governing Body:

- (i) **noted** the re-statement of the original target and yearly milestones for the BAME Awarding Gap KPI
- (ii) **approved** the change in KPI strategy target for student continuation from 95% to 93% and a resultant change to the yearly milestones.

GB 23/51 STRATEGIC RISKS (GB 23/P79)

The Governing Body considered the updated quarterly Strategic Risk dashboard (April 2024) following consideration by the Audit & Risk Committee (ARC) in March. Substantial revisions had been made to the commentaries, controls and actions including updates to reflect developments since the last ARC meeting.



GB 23/52 GOVERNING BODY COMMITTEES: MATTERS REQUIRING APPROVAL (GB 23/P80)

The Governing Body **approved** the updated Statement of Risk Appetite as recommended by the Audit & Risk Committee held on 18 March 2024.

GB 23/53 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

[REDACTED] noted that students had been demonstrating about the Gaza conflict in American universities and asked about the likelihood of this happening in the UK. The Vice-Chancellor reported that there had been a few demonstrations in English universities but, to date, the focus at Greenwich had been on supporting students affected by the situation. The University was concentrating on more practical aspects of support, such as offering students extenuating circumstances where needed.

The meeting finished at 19:10.

T A Brighton