Commercial in Confidence

Coventry University

Board of Governors
Monday, 14 October 2013
1600 hrs in the Board Room (ABG20), Alan Berry Building, Coventry University

Document GM149

Minutes

149/1
Present:
Prof A Richardson (Chair), Mr I Caulfield (Deputy Chair), Mr N Crockett, Mr M Short, Mr S Parker, Mr G Long, Prof J Norton, Mr D Clarke, Mr S Calvin, Mr P Ashdown, Mr G Berry, Dr B Dhadda, Mr A Majithia, Mrs L Noble, Prof, V Cox, Mr R Beasley, Mr M Stone

Apologies for Absence
Mr T Matthews, Mr K Bissett, Mr M Reeves

In Attendance:
Mr M Challoner (Clerk), Mr DGM Soutter (Deputy-Vice-Chancellor (Resources & Planning)), Mr J Latham (Deputy-Vice-Chancellor (Business Development)) (for Minute 149/10), Prof I Marshall (Deputy-Vice-Chancellor (Academic)) (for Minute 149/10)

149/2
Declarations of Interests

None

149/3
Items from the Chair

The Board noted the resignation of Prof Madeleine Atkins as Vice-Chancellor and congratulated her on her appointment as Chief Executive of HEFCE.

149/4
Workshop: Coventry University International Strategy 2020

.1
Consideration was given to a report presented by Prof David Pilsbury, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (International), and Mr Gary Armstrong, Director of the International Office outlining the progress to date in the development of an International Strategy for the University (Document G149/2).
As part of the discussion Governors participated in a workshop exercise in order to inform the development of the University’s International Strategy to 2020. Each group focused on a number of key areas of international activity, namely:

(i) International student recruitment
(ii) Strategic international partnerships
(iii) Developing international capacity
(iv) International student mobility
(v) Enhancing international reputation

Following the workshop exercise each of the groups fed back a number of comments in respect of the Strategy, which included:

(i) The need to understand the level of profitability for international recruitment, identifying those countries of strategic importance, the approach to agents, and the importance of social media and alumni to support recruitment.
(ii) An appraisal of the capacity, capabilities and development of true international staff.
(iii) The need to identify the next steps to support the significant planned increase in student mobility and the associated benefits.
(iv) The need to align the International Strategy with other key international activities, such as the Turkey JV.
(v) The need to build a broader profile for the University taking into account development with partners and brand.
(vi) Identifying the critical factors of success and broadening the University’s profile.

Following discussion the Board supported the broad principles set out in the strategy but recognised the need for a clear road map of implementation, which would identify and prioritise clear milestones. It was also considered that the overall strategic model needed to be more coherent in terms of its relationship with the Corporate Plan and other international activity, such as the international joint ventures currently being pursued.

Resolved that the aspirations set out in the draft International Strategy be endorsed and that a strategy and road map be presented to a future meeting of the Board for approval.

149/5
Turkey Joint Venture: Business Plan

Consideration was given to a report presented by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (International) (Document G149/3). It was reported that the business plan had been subject to detailed review by the Finance and Estates Committee and was recommended to the Board for the approval.

Following consideration of the report the Board discussed the financial and other risks should the partnership be unsuccessful. The Board also sought assurance with regard to the impact on business continuity. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor confirmed that there would be reasonable costs associated with
the University exiting the partnership and the proposed estate developed as part of the agreement would be at the partner’s disposal to expand their existing cohort.

.3
With regard to business continuity the Board was advised that following the receipt of external advice the University had been advised that the political instability in Syria was unlikely to adversely impact on Turkey. However, it was recognised that political elections were due to take place in Turkey during 2014 which created risks associated with political unrest. The Board was assured that the welfare and safety of students was a priority and that contingency plans were in place.

.3
Resolved that subject to final agreement and professional advice, approval be given to the University entering into five year programme agreement with Kadir Has University in Turkey that reflects the operational model outlined in the report.

149/6
Update from Student Governors

.1
The Board received an oral update on matters of interest and recent activities within CUSU Ltd from the Student Governors.

.2
It was reported that the number of sabbatical officers in the executive team had increased to five and that this year the Students’ Union had seen a significant increase in the number of students joining societies.

.3
The Board was advised that following a further internal audit of the Students’ Union it was anticipated that the report would be green once the recommendations by the auditors had been implemented.

.4
It was also reported that the Vice-Chancellor, Prof MJ Atkins, was to become an honorary member of the Students’ Union in recognition of her continued support for the Union.

149/7
Updates from Committee Chairs

The Board received an update from the Chair of the Finance and Estates Committee, which had met on two occasions since the last meeting of the Board. The following items were of particular interest to the Board:

(i) The Committee had approved the business plan for the new Social Enterprise Community Interest Company the incorporation of which had been previously agreed by the Board.
(ii) Revised financial plans and scenarios for Coventry University College had been approved.
(iii) Revised current account arrangements and credit limits had been agreed in view of the University’s significant cash balance.
(iv) Details of the design work and progress of planning consent had been received in relation to the Cross Faculty Science Block; a full business case would be presented to the Committee in the autumn.
(v) A further update was received from the Chairman and Managing Director of SGI Ltd on the company’s current trading position. The Committee had requested that the Director of Finance draw up a set of metrics against which any future drawdowns could be evaluated.

149/8 Confirmation of Minutes and Matters Arising

.1 The Minutes of the 174th meeting held on 8 July 2013 and the Minutes of the 148th Extra-Ordinary meeting held on 16 September 2013 were approved and signed as correct record (Documents GM147 and GM148).

.2 It was requested that the Board be provided with an update on the Estates Strategy at the next meeting.

148/9 Vice-Chancellor’s Report

.1 Consideration was given to a report presented by the Vice-Chancellor (Document G149/4).

.2 The Vice-Chancellor provided the Board with an update on student recruitment for the University, CULC and CUC.

.3 It was reported that the Trades Unions had balloted their members on taking industrial action following the 2012/13 pay dispute. It was noted that the University continued to be part of the national pay bargaining agreement and was supported by the Human Resources Committee.

.4 The Vice-Chancellor confirmed that University staff had been given two additional days annual leave for the University’s recent success in the Times Higher league table. The Board endorsed the recognition of staff for their contribution to the University’s success.

.5 The Board noted the University’s success in securing funding from HEFCE’s Catalyst Fund to develop a new Engineering and Manufacturing Institute in partnership with Unipart in Coventry.
Excellence with Impact: Coventry University Research Strategy 2020

.1
Consideration was given to the University’s Research Strategy to 2010 “Research with Impact” presented by the Vice-Chancellor (Document G149/5). The Board was asked to approve in principle the proposed direction of travel outlined within the Strategy.

.2
In presenting the report the Vice-Chancellor provided the Board with the historical context to the University’s research position to date. The focus of the new strategy would be to target activity and investment in key niche areas of research, which would have an economic, social, cultural or policy impact. In essence the strategy aimed to enhance the University’s research reputation by 2020.

.3
The Deputy-Vice-Chancellor (Academic) provided the Board with details of the lessons learnt arising from the preparation of the 2014 REF submission identified by external examiners. The new strategy would help to deliver the University’s ambition to improve the overall quality of its research. It was confirmed that the University would submit nine Units of Assessment for the 2014 REF, which would be linked to the University Research Groups identified in strategy.

.4
The Deputy-Vice-Chancellor (Business Development) reported that through the REF exercise the University had identified key areas of niche research in order to provide focus and consistency of delivery. A number of funding opportunities had been reviewed, together with opportunities within the market, and the intention was to develop partnerships with world-class organisations and HEIs both in the UK and internationally in order to capitalise on these opportunities.

.5
Following consideration of the Strategy the Board, whilst supportive, questioned whether it was ambitious enough and the proposals for implementation. It was reported that the University Research Centres to be established as part of the strategy were intended to be market leaders and drive the output of the quality of research. The strategy aimed to ensure a balance was struck between the successful outputs of the Research Centres and the resources available to support them. The intention was to deliver depth in the quality of research, rather than a broad range of research activity. With regard to implementation it was confirmed that was a clear plan for the delivery of the Strategy.

.6
The Chair highlighted the fact that the Research Strategy was a key strategic investment for the University and that whilst the University had made significant improvements in the quality of teaching and the student experience, the priority now was driving the quality of research.

.7
The Board referred to the proposed KPIs and metrics identified in the strategy and suggested the inclusion of a research income target. The Vice-Chancellor reported that previous income targets had driven particular organisational behaviours rather than improve the quality of research income. It was confirmed that the financial metrics in relation to the University’s research was currently
subject to review and consideration would be given to the inclusion of an income KPI once this exercise was complete.

.8 Resolved that the Research Strategy “Excellence with Impact” to 2020 be approved in principle and that a research workshop be arranged for the next meeting of the Board in November.

149/11 Corporate Plan 2013-2014

.1 The Board considered the Corporate Plan 2013-2014 presented by the Vice-Chancellor (Document G149/6).

.2 Resolved that the Corporate Plan 2013-2014 be approved.

149/12 Review of Board Effectiveness and the Effectiveness of the Chair of the Board of Governors

.1 Consideration was given to a joint report presented by the Deputy-Chair of the Board, Mr I Caulfield and the Clerk to the Board (Document G149/7).

.2 In response to a number of the findings the Chair highlighted the important role, which the Chair of the Board plays in supporting and challenging the executive. He also highlighted the need to strengthen the Boards of the Subsidiary Companies to ensure there was sufficient challenge and debate.

.3 Resolved:

(A) That the findings of the review of the effectiveness of the Chair be endorsed.

(B) That the approach used to review the effectiveness of the Chair be commended ensuring that it is used as a basis for future reviews.

(C) That the Governance Working Group be requested to consider those governance matters raised as part of review into the effectiveness of the Board and the Chair and that the Group report its findings and any recommendations to the Board in the early part of 2014.

(D) That the Chair be requested to update the Board on matters of interest outside of formal meetings.
Research Report: The Impact of Engagement in Sport on Graduate Employability

Resolved that this item be deferred to the next meeting of the Board in November.

Any Other Business

None

Schedule of Meetings 2013-14

The Board is asked to note the schedule of meetings for 2013/14. All meetings start at 1600 hrs in the Board Room (ABG20), Alan Berry building unless otherwise stated.

27 November 2013
27 January 2014
17 March 2014
12 May 2014
14 July 2014 (followed by annual dinner)

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