

Confirmed Minutes – without reserved items.

## Board of Governors

Held on 11 April 2024, at 09:30

Present:	Dame Julia Unwin Neil Braithwaite Jennifer Adams Alison Davies The Rt Revd Richard Frith Prof. Karen Bryan OBE Matt Blackstock Dr Ernestine Gheyoh Ndzi Mohammed Ali OBE Andrew Chang Brian Chiyesu Andy Falconer Mark Fordyce Prof. Graham Henderson CBE DL Pauline Waterhouse OBE	Chair of the Board of Governors Deputy Chair of the Board of Governors Chair, Audit Committee Chair, People Committee Chair, Foundation Committee Vice Chancellor Student Governor Staff Governor Governor Governor Governor Governor Governor Governor Governor Governor
Apologies:	The Very Revd Dominic Barrington The Rt Revd Paul Ferguson	Governor Governor
In attendance:	Prof. Richard Bourne Rob Hickey Kathryn Kendon Prof. Rob Mortimer Christina Nichols  Christopher Howell Ulla Vaereth	Pro Vice Chancellor (PVC): Education Chief Operating Officer University Secretary & Registrar PVC: Research & International Director of Strategy & Projects (11:00-12:20 only) Minuting Secretary Administrative Support

### 37/23 Welcome and apologies

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and apologies were noted.

The Chair congratulated Graham Henderson on receiving an honorary doctorate from Coventry University.

### 38/23 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

### 39/23 Minutes of the meetings held on 23 November 2023 and 07 March 2024

The minutes from the meetings held on 23 November 2023 and 07 March 2024 were **approved** as accurate records.

#### **40/23 Matters Arising**

##### **.1 M24/23 - Research Ethics and Integrity Benchmarking**

The University Secretary & Registrar advised that there were no clear benchmarking sets around research ethics. However, the lay member of the University Research Ethics and Integrity Committee, Paul McCay, provided valuable external perspectives to support decision making.

The Board **agreed** that this action could be closed following this update.

#### **41/23 Chair's report**

The Chair reflected on the University's positive outcome from Ofsted's review of York St John's apprenticeship provision. The Chair and Alison Davies had spoken with Ofsted as representatives for the Board. Good progress had been made since Ofsted's last review. On behalf of the Board, the Chair thanked everyone involved in the process.

The Chair noted that she had recently carried out 1:1s with governors. She thanked everyone for their time, feedback, and ideas that would support the Board delivering its responsibilities going forward. There was a consensus that the Board was taking positive steps forward and making well-founded decisions, but needed to keep constructively challenging ideas and outcomes to ensure the University continued to progress.

The Chair highlighted that the Deputy Chair had recently attended a Committee of University Chairs (CUC) event on the financial fragility of the sector. The Deputy Chair advised that the whole sector was facing a tough financial environment. The financial position of the sector and York St John would form a core part of this meeting.

A new CUC northern group would be meeting for the first-time next week with a focus on regeneration.

In March, the University of York announced that Dr Alice Maynard CBE had been appointed as the new Chair of its governing body. The Chair had spoken with Dr Maynard regarding both universities working collaboratively and supportively for the benefit of the community.

The Board **noted** the updates.

#### **42/23 Vice Chancellor's update**

**Reserved minute: commercially sensitive and Freedom of Information exempt**

Paper BoG.23.03.15 was received.

#### **43/23 Students' Union President's report**

Paper BoG.23.01.16 was received. The Students' Union President spoke to the paper.

The report contained the Students' Union Financial Statements 2022-23, as well as an overview of the recent Students' Union Elections.

The Students' Union Officer team for 2024-25 was confirmed as:

- President of the Students' Union: Abinash Chaudhary
- President of Education: Kamil Lawal
- President of Wellbeing & Diversity: Mario Owiriwa

Physical space continued to be a concern and challenge for students, particularly for sports, societies and clubs. The Students' Union was working with the Executive Board and Estates department to ensure space was optimised.

For the 2023-24 academic year, the Students' Union had opted not to put a limit on the number of course representatives across all courses, in order to allow representation from a larger cohort of students. There were currently 415 representatives, the highest number there had ever been. The value of feedback from representatives was highlighted and it was described how this filtered into conversations around the University's Teaching Excellence Framework, Annual Participation Plan and student engagement.

The Students' Union was working with Alkhemy to review their governance processes. The main aim was to make sure both the London and York campuses were appropriately represented. The consultation would run from March to May. Ideas being considered included certain roles always being allocated to a specific campus.

The Board noted a number of ongoing creative events for students, particularly in relation to live music.

The Board was encouraged by a significant increase in student engagement across numerous areas.

The Board thanked the Students' Union President for the report and his continued leadership.

The Board **noted** the report.

#### **44/23 Financial Position Update**

**Reserved minute: commercially sensitive and Freedom of Information exempt**

The Chief Operating Officer delivered a presentation.

#### **45/23 New Strategy Update**

*The Director of Strategy & Projects joined the meeting.*

The Board received a presentation on the development of the University's new Strategy, which included the views of students and staff, consideration of the strategies of other institutions, and the current context of the University and Higher Education sector.

The Board shared their initial views at the meeting, with opportunity after the meeting to share further feedback.

The Board was keen that the Strategy reflected what made the University special and distinctive. This included: a sense of community; the University's culture; treating students as a name, not a number; delivering quality courses; the University's foundation; and, its mission to advance knowledge, promote understanding and achieve educational outcomes for the benefit of all.

On 'social justice', the Board discussed that the Strategy should clearly show what this means to the University and not just be used as "buzzwords." Similarly, the Board proposed that the University's strong commitment to the environment and sustainability was clearly highlighted.

Governors agreed that ingenuity and creativity was needed to keep the University moving forwards and delivering a high-quality service for students. While consolidating the University's position could be beneficial, a lack of ambition could see the University fall behind its competitors. The Board encouraged Executives to consider fully committing to areas such as partnerships and transnational education should it be agreed that they were appropriate avenues to follow.

For research, the Board was keen that all research in some way benefitted students and the wider community. Quality teaching must remain a priority over teaching being used as an avenue to raise money for research.

The Board discussed digitisation in the context of making sure any developments supported, rather than took away, in-person contact for students.

The Board delegated the wording and presentation of the new Strategy to staff and Executives. They were however supportive of a shorter Strategy, having a tag line rather than a date for the title, using strategic enablers rather than key performance indicators, and combining the mission and vision of the University.

The Board **considered** the item.

*The Director of Strategy & Projects left the meeting.*

#### **46/23 Annual Quality Report**

Paper BoG.23.03.17 was received. The Chair of Audit Committee and the University Secretary & Registrar spoke to the paper.

The Annual Quality Report (AQR) provides an analytical account of student academic experience and outcomes during the 2022-23 academic year. It aims to:

- evidence robust consideration of relevant Office for Students conditions of registration;
- evidence a clear focus on enhancement of quality of provision;
- evidence externality used within quality processes;
- demonstrate the consistent application of an effective and robust academic governance framework.

The Chair of Audit Committee advised that Audit Committee had agreed that the report was a comprehensive and honest assessment of the key academic standards that underpinned the quality of education and student experience that York St John provided. Good progress was noted in several areas, including in: the Teaching and Excellence Framework classification, Student Survey results, and widespread independent validation of academic standards from external examiners. Areas of challenged and deterioration included degree apprenticeship provision, quality assurance processes for courses delivered via partnerships, and persistent attainment gaps for some disadvantaged groups; however, the Committee had been assured that work was already underway to address each of these concerns, with progress in relation to apprenticeships being particularly notable.

The Board **approved** the report.

#### **47/23 York St John University Financial Regulations 2024**

Paper BoG.23.03.18a was received. The Chair of Finance & Capital Development Committee and the Chief Operating Officer spoke to the paper.

Several minor changes were proposed to the Financial Regulations.

The Board received the report and:

- a) **approved** the Financial Regulations for 2024.
- b) **agreed** to the continued use of electronic authorisations to approve financial processes which lie outside the scope of the OneUni Financial System in place of wet signatures; this process was first authorised during the pandemic.
- c) **noted** the Donations Acceptance Policy was approved by Audit Committee at its meeting on 07 March 2024.

#### **48/23 Barclays Revolving Credit Facility**

Paper BoG.23.03.18b was received. The Chair of Finance & Capital Development Committee and the Chief Operating Officer spoke to the paper.

The Board **approved** the extension to the period whereby the University retains access to the existing Revolving Credit Facility (RCF) of £10m, for a further two years from the date of signing the amendment to the Agreement, at a cost of £63k per annum.

#### **49/23 Governor Appointment**

**Reserved minute: commercially sensitive and Freedom of Information exempt**

Paper BoG.23.03.19a was received.

## **50/23 Review of the Scheme of Delegation**

Paper BoG.23.03.19b was received. The University Secretary & Registrar spoke to the paper.

The Scheme of Delegation documents where authority rests within the University for specific decisions made in the University's name.

Seven minor amendments were outlined in the paper that aimed to update role changes and clarify processes, including who would cover if a delegated authority was unavailable (e.g., on annual leave).

The Board **approved** the Scheme of Delegation.

## **51/23 Student Fees and Support 2024-25 and 2025-26**

Paper BoG.23.03.20 was received. The Chair of People Committee and the Chief Operating Officer spoke to the paper.

The Board noted that the proposed international student fees were still lower than the sector average.

The Board **approved** the fee levels proposed in the report for 2024-25 and 2025-26.

## **52/23 Reports from Academic Board, Health, Safety & Wellbeing Committee, and the following Board of Governors sub-Committees: Audit; Finance & Capital Development; Governance & Nominations; People; and, Remuneration.**

Paper BoG.23.03.21 was received. The Chairs of their respective Board and Committees spoke to the paper.

Academic Board had approved the Student Protection Plan (SPP) and Refund and Compensation Policy.

Health, Safety & Wellbeing Committee had received: a range of audit reports, compliance reports on the University's fire safety and general health & safety, and discussed measures expected to be required through Martyn's Law.

Audit Committee had approved the University's Anti-Bribery Statement. The statement showed York St John's commitment and approach to upholding the highest ethical standards in the conduct of its activities, emphasising fairness, honesty, transparency, and compliance with all relevant laws. The Committee also received a presentation on Cyber Security as a risk topic, which highlighted the excellent progress the University had made in recent years and the challenges it still faced. A report showing the University was compliant with the Universities UK Accommodation Code of Practice had also been received.

People Committee highlight the value that had been added to the Committee by introducing deep dive topics.

The Board **noted** the report.

**Part D of the agenda**

The following starred items were in the Part D section of the meeting's agenda. No request was made for these items to be brought forward and therefore were noted without discussion.

**54/23 Board of Governors and sub-Committee dates for academic year 2024-25**

Paper BoG.23.03.22 was received.

The Board **noted** the report.

**55/23 Period 5 (P5) Budget and Forecasting report**

Paper BoG.23.03.23 was received.

The Board **noted** the report.

**56/23 Annual report on the University's Legal Obligations**

Paper BoG.23.03.24 was received.

The Board **noted** the report.

**57/23 Any other business**

There was no other business to discuss.

**58/23 Review of the meeting**

All items had been covered appropriately.

The Board highlighted the value of receiving presentations in advance where appropriate, in order to allow them to better prepare for discussions.

**59/23 Date of next meetings**

Friday 17 May 2024 – Joint meeting with the Academic Board

Thursday 18 July 2024 – Board of Governors' meeting

**Action Log**

Minute	Action	Responsibility	Board Due Date	Status
M24/23	<b>Research Ethics and Integrity Benchmarking:</b> Following a query, it was agreed that Executives would see if there were any benchmark measures of ethics and integrity.	KK	April 2024	Closed