UNIVERSITY OF HERTFORDSHIRE HIGHER EDUCATION CORPORATION

BOARD OF GOVENORS

Minutes of the meeting of the Board of Governors held on 4 June 2024.

PRESENT: Dr Lynn Drummond (Chair)

Professor Paul Layzell Dr Dipti Amin Lionel Wallace

Dr Janet Bohrer Dr Jon Walmsley Tony Kypreos David Sproul Bob Macnaughton David Williams Tamia Crowl Raj Singh Nick Willott

Karen Trew Professor Quintin McKellar

IN ATTENDANCE:

Rohit Mahadevu Dr Charmagne Barnes Alistair Moffat Professor Wendy Wills Sharon Harrison-Barker Jo Stuart Helen Davidson

Robyn Mclintock Dr Melanie Crofts

David Gillard Daniel Procter Rebecca Gendreau Hobbs

Elizabeth Heath

APOLOGIES 1

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Dr Joel Carlton, Lesley Titcomb and Professor Mairi Watson.

2 **CHAIR'S OPENING REMARKS (IF ANY)**

The Chair Welcomed everyone to the meeting.

She advised the Board that Rohit Mahadevu was attending his first Board meeting as President of the Hertfordshire Students' Union. He was accompanied by the Chief Executive Officer of the Hertfordshire Students' Union, Rebecca Gendreau-Hobbs, The Chair expressed a warm welcome to Rohit Mahadevu and advised him that the Board looked forward to working with him for his Term of Office.

3 **NEW DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (IF ANY)**

One declaration of interest was made at the meeting by an Independent Member of the Board, David Sproul. He advised the Chair that he was to become Chair of the Board of Pennon Group PLC, an environmental utility infrastructure company which owns Southwest Water Limited. The Board noted that in taking up the position of Chair of Pennon Group PLC, David Sproul had given full consideration to the time commitments of becoming the Chair of the Board of Governors of the University and of Pennon Group PLC. He advised the Board that he did not consider that a conflict of interest arose in respect of both roles.

(Clerk's Note – The Board to note that no conflict of Interest would arise in relation to both roles).

MINUTES - 23 APRIL 2024 4

RESOLVED

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 23 April 2024 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair, subject to the minor amendment made by the Vice Chancellor, Professor Quintin McKellar to the Minute of his verbal Vice Chancellor's Report.

(Confidential Agenda Paper 4, refers)

5 SCHEDULE OF ACTIONS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

The Secretary and Registrar, Sharon Harrison-Barker, submitted a Schedule of Actions arising from the Minutes of the meeting held on 23 April 2024. The Board noted that the previous Schedule of Actions had been reviewed by the Deputy Secretary and Registrar, Helen Davidson, and the Head of Governance

Services, Elizabeth Heath and that all remaining Items on the Scheule of Actions would be subject to report at the current meeting, or the Board meeting scheduled to take place on 9 July 2024.

RESOLVED

That the Board received and noted the Schedule of Actions arising from the Minutes of the meeting held on 24 April 2024.

(Confidential Agenda Paper, 5, refers)

6 MEDICAL SCHOOL - CONTRACTUAL AGREEMENTS WITH ST GEORGE'S, UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

The Chair presented a verbal update on the current position regarding the Contractual Agreements between the University and St George's Hospital Medical School.

The Chair advised that an Extraordinary Board Meeting (EGM) had taken place on the 14 May 2024 in relation to the Medical School Application. She further advised that the Contractual Agreements between the Parties, had not been signed due to an amendment being required regarding the timeline.

In the Deputy Vice Chancellor, Professor Mairi Watson's absence from the meeting, the Chair read out a note from her to update the Board on the current position.

"The papers submitted to the Board outlined the risk around the merger of St Geroge's Hospital Medical School and City University, University of London, to create City St George's University of London (CSGUL). The General Medical Council (GMC) approval would not be in place immediately on the date of the merger. The University of Hertfordshire Contract was drafted to contain a clause that if the GMC approval of City St George's University of London was either delayed or not forthcoming, the University of Hertfordshire had the option to delay the launch of the Programme, or, terminate both Agreements in the event that (CSGUL) has not been recognised as a Medical School by the GMC by 1 March 2024 (this date has now been amended to 1 May 2024"...

The Board noted that the Deputy Vice Chancellor, Professor Mairi Watson and the Dean of the Medical School, Professor Zoe Aslanpour had approved the amendment to the Contractual Agreements The Chair reassured that Board that Indemnity Insurance capped at £10,000,000 (ten million pounds) was in place in relation to risks associated with the Contractual Agreements.

The Deputy Secretary and Registrar, Helen Davidson advised the Board that the finalised version of the Contractual Agreements were currently with the Parties and would be signed imminently.

RESOLVED

The Board received and noted the Chair's verbal report.

(Confidential Agenda Item 6, refers)

7 THE CYBERSECURITY JOURNEY

The Board received a report presented by the Chief Information and Digital Officer, David Gillard on the University's Cyber Security Journey.

The report provided a summary of the cyber security controls deployed by the University to keep its users, data and computers safe. It further provided an analysis of the current approach which was based on the National Cyber Security Centre's 10 Steps to Cyber Security model. The paper aimed to highlight the importance of constant adaptation and investment against the backdrop of an evolving cyber security landscape.

The Board noted that the University was aware of the current cyber risks and had identified improvements that would ensure cyber security goals were achieved. The University had established repeatable processes to identify and respond to threats. Well defined security policies and detailed penetration tests to ensure the University could take prompt remedial actions were in place. The University's Cyber Security controls were comprehensively audited by the University-appointed auditors ITAA.

The Board were advised that, the University maintained CyberEssentials and NHS Data Security toolkit certifications which provided further validation of the controls. Overall, the University was at the minimum recommended level of maturity on the NIST Cyber Security framework. The Board further noted that the journey to strengthen security capabilities must be continued. New risks were emerging all the time, the University must ensure that all necessary security was in place to prevent as far as practicable, a future cyber-attack.

The Chair and members of the Board thanked David Gillard for a very detailed and informative report, and made a request that the Board was updated on the issue of cyber security on a regular basis,

RESOLVED

That the Board received and noted the report.

(Confidential Agenda Paper, 7 refers)

8 RESEARCH, ENTERPRISE AND INNOVATION UPDATE AND FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES

The Chair advised the Board that she had requested the Pro Vice Chancellor (Research and Enterprise), Professor Wendy Wills to present an update to the Board on the current work being undertaken in Research, Enterprise, and Innovation.

The Pro Vice Chancellor advised the Board that up to the end of May 2024, the University had been awarded 100 Research Awards totalling £26.6 million (£13.7 million if the E3 Hub figure was excluded from the figures) which was classified as a Funding Grant rather than a Research Grant.

The Board noted that as the same period last year, the University had received 67 Awards totalling £8.7 million. The Board further noted that 16 of this year's Research Awards had a value of £300,000 or more, compared to 12 for the whole of last year. These were traditionally defined as large Awards. The number within the Enterprise Category was 6, sustained this year, despite fewer Awards.

The Board were advised that the more focused, strategic approach to research funding with less emphasis on application and award targets, and greater emphasis on a strategic/discipline/expertise fit, was paying off.

The Board were delighted to note the number of significant research awards received by the University this year.

The Chair expressed her thanks and congratulations to staff in the Research, Enterprise and Innovations teams.

RESOLVED

That the Board received and noted the verbal report and presentation.

(Confidential Agenda paper 8, refers)

9 **UPDATE ON STRATEGIC PLANNING - 2025-30**

The Board received a report presented by the Pro Vice Chancellor (International and Marketing Communications), Jo Stuart, on Strategic Planning 2025-30.

She advised the Board of the work that had been undertaken so far to consult staff across the University on the development of the new Strategic Plan, 2025-2030. Two 'Town Hall' Events had taken place on both the College Lane and De Havilland Campuses. An online Question and Answer facility was available. All Deans of School and Heads of Strategic Business Units (SBUs) were cascading the high-level plans to their teams. Feedback from staff had been received in a number of formats.

The Board noted that broadly, staff were very positive on the 'direction of travel' of the Strategic Plan and were in agreement with the objectives across the three (3) strands. During the 'Town Hall' Events, staff raised valid concerns as to how the Strategic Plan would affect 'people' and their career prospects. To address concerns raised, the Director of Human Resources, Chizoma Okaro, had arranged to run four (4) 'Drop -In Surgeries' whereby staff would have the opportunity to raise any questions or discuss any concerns they may have had following the 'Town Hall' Events.

The online feedback portal would close on Friday 7 June 2024. Thereafter, the responses would be consolidated and an updated report on Staff Feedback would be brought to the Board meeting on 9 July 2024.

The Board were advised that it would be necessary for a Strategic Working Group to be convened in September 2024 in order that the high-level plans for the Strategic Plan 2025-30 could be approved. Once approved, the 'Operational Plans' could be developed in conjunction with staff.

A consultation would also take place with the University's Partners in the Autumn. A Board Strategy dinner would take place in November 2024, followed by the launch of the Strategic Plan 2025-30 in January 2024.

A member enquired as to how near the University were to achieving the long term vision with regard to the new Strategic Plan. The Pro Vice Chancellor advised that this would become clearer once all of the staff feedback had been collated.

A member asked about whether Continuing Professional Development would be integrated within future plans. The Pro Vice Chancellor (Education and Student Experience), Dr Charmagne Barnes, advised that CPD would be incorporated within the Education and Student Experience Strand and would form part of Portfolio Provision especially in relation to Higher and Degree Apprenticeships and the Lifelong Learning Entitlement.

ACTION

A Strategy Working Group to be convened in September 2024 to sign off the top level of the Strategic Plan 2025-2030.

RESOLVED

That the Board received and noted the report.

(Confidential Agenda Item 9, refers)

10 STUDENT RECRUITMENT AND MIGRATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE REPORT - UPDATES

The Board received a verbal report presented by the Pro Vice Chancellor (International and Marketing Communications), Jo Stuart, on Student Recruitment and the Migration Advisory Committee Report.

The Board were advised that Home recruitment was currently level in comparison with the same time last year. An increased number of offers had been made this year and the number of 'Firm' acceptances had increased in comparison with the same time last year. The Board noted that all acceptances had to be notified via Universities and Colleges Admission Services (UCAS) by 6 June 2024. A full report on recruitment numbers, budget and an update on Clearing arrangements would be brought to the Board on 9 July 2024.

The Board were advised that the Migration Advisory Committee Report on the Graduate Route for International Students was positive. The Government published their response to the Report and indicated that there should be a mandatory Registration Scheme for Agents in place, and a Quality Framework in relation to the recruitment of Agents by Universities. The Pro Vice Chancellor confirmed to the Board that the University already had these measures in place, and the Quality Framework was embedded in all University Contracts with Agents.

The Government response detailed that data and commission payments to Agents should be published. This may breach competition legislation and Contractual Agreements with Agents. The Board would be undated further on this matter when more information was available.

The Board were reassured that the University was in the best place possible and student completion and progression remained high. The Board noted that International recruitment may be down by 10%-15% as compared to the previous year. The Board were reassured that considerable work was being undertaken with International Agents and Managers to recruit students, numerous initiatives were also in place to assist in this regard.

The Board were advised that the Kings Award to the University had helped in securing further interest, however, the impact of the calling of the General Election and the uncertainly that this may bring, has had an effect on application numbers. The Pro Vice Chancellor advised the Board that she was confident that the numbers for International Student applications put into the budget could be achieved.

A member enquired as to the geographical area the University was currently recruiting from. The Pro Vice Chancellor advised that recruitment from Nigeria remained challenging. The University had excellent sales personnel in Nigeria and there was a market there for recruitment to the University. The Board noted that the University continued to recruit from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. The Pro Vice Chancellor further advised the Board that at the meeting on 9 July, Professor Kate Asante, Professor of Skills and Innovation and Director of Lifelong Learning and Employment, would be presenting a report on Virtual Internships which it was hoped would significantly increase application numbers.

A member asked about the possible impact of a Labour Government. The Vice Chancellor, Professor Quintin McKellar, advised that any impact was currently unknown, but increased migration numbers was not anticipated.

RESOLVED

That the Board received and noted the verbal report.

(Confidential Agenda Item 10, refers)

11 NON-CONTINUATION

The Board received a report presented by the Pro Vice Chancellor (Education and Student Experience), Dr Charmagne Barnes, on Non-continuation.

The report provided an update on cross-university interventions designed to improve student retention, and thus reduce non-continuation.

The Board noted that non-continuation had been increasing sector wide since the pandemic. Non-continuation measured the proportion of students who were no longer in higher education and did not complete their undergraduate qualification. The reasons for non-continuation were complex and multifarious, external (e.g. cost of living, students working, mental health) and internal (the impact of course design, assessments, student confidence, belonging, academic support and much more). While this may be sectoral, it was nonetheless a central consideration in ensuring an excellent student experience and presented challenges for forecasting.

The Board were advised that the University's internal measure of 'withdrawals gave an early warning of likely levels of non-continuation. The Board noted that while the withdrawal rate for 2022/23, raised concerns, at May 10, 2024, there has been a 21% drop in total withdrawals in 2023/24. Whilst the position was positive overall, areas of effective action, had been identified, for tracking ongoing impact, and expanding interventions and services across all Schools. The University was implementing changes to policy to ensure University initiated withdrawals were minimised.

The Board noted that non continuation targets were built into the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) as part of the University's performance in the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF). Progress in this area was one of the operational areas of focus in the current strategic plan, and action to respond to the challenges were an aspect of core business for the Educational Student Experience Committee (ESEC).

These include (the list is not exhaustive) initiatives such as Getting Ready to Study at Herts; the Personal Tutor framework; Herts Academic Skills framework; Herts Learning with a focus on Teaching, Learning and assessment; Well-being and support services; Identified fora for Student voice; Use of Data for Learning dashboard to identify student engagement; student performance management group (SPMG) focusing on annual data reporting and analysis of student non-continuation; development of graduate skills and a focus on employment, and employability through the curriculum and placement and work experience.

The Chair thanked the Pro Vice Chancellor for the comprehensive and informative report.

A member asked whether consideration had been given as with other Universities to undertake a radical approach to addressing non-completion by restructuring the timetable and the introduction of block teaching. The Pro Vice Chancellor advised that she was in the process of reviewing all matters associated with

timetabling, the collection of data and undertaking a pilot scheme within two Schools to test new initiatives which sought to address the issue of non-continuation. It was necessary for attendance pattern data to be collated, monitored and evaluated before any decision could be made regarding changes to the delivery of courses.

The Pro Vice Chancellor advised that she was working through short- and medium-term objectives in this regard and would report fully to the Board in due course on results based on initiatives that had been put in place.

Members expressed their concern at the current data on non-continuation and requested that the Board be kept fully updated.

The Vice Chancellor, Professor Quintin McKellar, advised the Board that the University were committing more resources and interventions to the issue of non-continuation, however the situation was continuing to get worse. He suggested that one possible reason was the cost of living. The student Maintenance Grant had not been increased in line with inflation and therefore did not cover a student's living costs. Students often had to undertake paid work to fund their living costs, the paid work impacted on their University attendance and work, this in turn may have resulted in non-continuation. The sector were lobbying the Government on the current level of the Maintenance Grant, and why this was not increased in line with inflation, as currently, it did not cover student's living costs.

RESOLVED

That the Board received and note the report.

(Confidential Agenda Paper 11, refers)

12 VICE CHANCELLOR'S REPORT

The Board received a verbal report from the Vice Chancellor, Professor Quintin McKellar. He gave updates on the following matters.

'Mickey Mouse Degrees'

The Government had announced that it would cut approximately 130,000-degree places for degrees which in their opinion would not provide a cohort of graduates with the same earnings potential as those individuals who were not graduates. The cost savings would be redirected to provide 100,000 higher level Apprenticeships. The Board would be updated once more information was available following the result of the General Election.

Migration Advisory Committee Report

The outcome of the Migration Advisory Committee Review on the Graduate Route was very positive. No abuse in the system was identified. The review concluded that Graduate Route students earnt the same as UH Graduates if they were compared at the same time. Data was only available at 12 months for Graduate Route students and 15 months for UH Gradates. When the data was extrapolated, the earnings were confirmed as the approximately the same. Fifty per cent of students that graduated via the Graduate Route remained in the UK on a Higher Skilled Visa. This number was likely to fall as a consequence of the requirement for the graduate to earn £38,000 per annum, unless they had a PhD.

The Government response to the Migration Advisory Committee Report was not as positive as the sector would have hoped. Extensive lobbying has taken place behind he scenes by the University Alliance and Universities UK, which had resulted in the Government not removing the Graduate Route entirely, or restricting it to Universities producing in their opinion, the 'brightest and best' students.

The Government had indicated that all Universities were required to sign up to a Mandatory Agent Quality Framework. The University had already signed up to the Framework, as had another 112 Universities. A further requirement was that all Universities would be required to publish the spend on Agents commission. The University had a high Agent spend as a consequence of the number of International students enrolled. If the spend was divided by the number of students, the quantum would be less per student relative to other Universities.

The Government had suggested a more rigorous response to student completion and earnings data, however, had not outlined in what form this would take.

Office for National Statistics - Migration Statistics

The statistics indicated that migration figures had decreased by 10%. This figure had the potential to relieve pressure on both political parties with regard to migration.

Office for Students (OfS) - Sustainability Survey

The results of the Survey mirrored those of the Sustainability Survey conducted by Universities UK (UUK). By 2026-27, 202, or 75% of Institutions would be in deficit. 135, or 50% would have liquidity at a level which would be considered to be dangerous.

Visit to the University by the Labour Candidate for the Welwyn Hatfield Constituency and Shadow Chief Secretary to the Treasury

Andrew Lewin and Darren Jones would be visiting the University on Thursday 6 June 2024 to discuss migration issues.

Festival of Ideas

The Festival of Ideas was an outstanding success. 4,500 people attended the University over two days. The majority of attendees on the first day were local school children and on the second day many families attended the event. One particular highlight of the event was the Poet's Corner. The Humanities staff had put on the Poet's Corner for school children to come and read their poems. They all performed remarkably, cheered on by the other children and all impressed their teachers. Jo Stuart would like to make this an annual event. From a community engagement perspective, the event was very successful and provided an opportunity for people to visit and experience the Campus. An amazing two days was had by all.

RESOLVED

That the Board received and noted the verbal report.

(Confidential Agenda Item 12, refers)

13 INSTRUMENTS AND ARTICLES

The Board received a report from the Deputy Secretary and Registrar, Helen Davidson, regarding required amendments to the University's Instruments and Articles of Government.

The Board were advised that a review had been conducted of the University's Instruments and Articles of Government via the University's External Lawyers, Mills and Reeve LLP and the University's Legal and Compliance Services.

The review was instigated in order that the required changes could be instigated in light of the new Freedom of Speech Legislation, which was due to come into force on 1 August 2024, and to address required amendments related to staff disciplinary and management arrangements.

RESOLVED

The Board received and noted the report and approved the amendments to the University's Instruments and Articles of Government.

(Confidential Agenda Paper 13, refers)

14 EQUALITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION ANNUAL REPORT - 2022-23

The Board received the Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Annual Report 2022-23, presented by Dr Melanie Crofts, Associate Professor and Head of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.

The Board noted the content of the report. The Chair thanked Dr Crofts for the detailed and informative report.

A member asked what the biggest challenge moving forward in terms of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. Dr Crofts advised him that the biggest challenge was the breadth and number of actions across the Action Plan, and making sure the actions could be progressed within the envelope of resources available.

A member enquired as to why the data contained in Table 7 of the Report was so high. Dr Crofts advised that there was a glitch in the system which permitted students to skip answering the questions. A fix was being worked on to address the issue. The Board were advised that it was important for students to know why certain questions were asked, what the University used the data for, and what changes had occurred as a result of an evaluation of data received.

RESOLVED

That the Board received and noted the Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Annual report 2022-23.

(Confidential Agenda Paper 14, refers)

15 FINANCE COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT - 2022-23

The Board received the Finance Committee Annual Report 2022-23, presented by the Chair of the Finance Committee, David Williams.

The Board noted the breadth of work that had been undertaken by the Finance Committee in 2022-23. The Chair on behalf of the Board thanked the members of the Finance Committee for their hard work and commitment.

RESOLVED

That the Board received and noted the report.

(Confidential Agenda Paper 15, refers)

16 EMPLOYMENT, REMUNERATION, GOVERNANCE AND NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2022-23

The Board received the Employment, Remuneration, Governance and Nominations Annual Report 2022-23, presented by the Chair of the Board of Governors in the absence of the Chair of the Committee, Lesley Titcomb.

The Board noted the breadth of work that had been undertaken by the Employment, Remuneration, Governance and Nominations Committee in 2022-23. The Chair on behalf of the Board thanked the members of the Committee for their hard work and commitment.

RESOLVED

That the Board received and noted the report.

(Confidential Agenda Paper 16, refers)

17 FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT REPORT - APRIL 2024

The Board received and considered the Financial Management Report for April 2024, presented by the Group Finance Director, Alistair Moffat.

RESOLVED

That the Financial Management Report for April 2024 be received and noted.

(Confidential Agenda Paper 17, refers)

18 Q3 FINANCIAL FORECAST 2023-24

The Board received a verbal report presented by the Group Finance Director, Alistair Moffat on the Quarter3 Financial Forecast 2023-24.

The Board noted that at the end of the Q3 period, the surplus was £23 million. The cash at year end was £130,000 and the CAPEX was currently at £57 million. The Board were advised of the current position regarding the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). The Group Finance Director advised that he believed the two KPIs for research and other income would be met. The KPI for 'earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortisation (EDITDA) would be very close to being met. However, final confirmation could not be provided until the 2023-24 accounts had been fully audited in October

The Chair thanked the Group Finance Director and advised the Board that the SPECTRA building was nearing completion on time and on budget. She advised members of the Board that should they wish to visit the building, to advise the Head of Governance Services, Elizabeth Heath who would liaise with the Director of Estates, Ian Grimes, to make arrangements for a visit.

ACTION

The Head of Governance Services to make arrangements for Governors to visit the SPECTRA building.

RESOLVED

That the Quarter 3 financial forecast 2023-24 be received and noted.

(Confidential Agenda Item 18, refers)

19 REPORTABLE EVENTS

The Board received the Office for Students (OfS) Reportable Events Report for the period 9 April to 21 May 2024, presented by the Deputy Secretary and Registrar, Helen Davidson.

The Board were advised that no reportable events were reported to the Office for Students (OfS) for the period 8 April 2024 to 21 May 2024. The Board were further advised that that there was no correspondence with the Office for Students (OfS) in the period 9 April 2024 to 21 May 2024. The Board noted that one event was considered as possibly meeting the threshold of a reportable event, nut it was determined this was not reportable.

The Board were that on 3 June 2024, the University had received confirmation that the Bar Standards Board that reapproved the University as an Authorised Education Training Provider. The Bar Course Programme would now open for applications for September 2024.

RESOLVED

That the Office for Students (OfS) Reportable Events Report for the period 9 April 2024 to 21 May 2024 be received and noted.

(Confidential Agenda Paper 19, refers)

20 CLERK'S REPORT

The Board received the Clerk's Report and noted the information detailed therein on the following matters:

- (a) Schedule of Meetings 2024-25
- (b) Future Board Business 9 July 2024
- (c) Vice Chancellor's Briefing April 2024
- (d) Letter from the Office for Students (OfS) dated 10 May 2024 regarding Protests on Campus Tackling Harassment and Securing Freedom of Speech.
- (e) Policy Update

AGREED

21

22

That the Clerk's Report and information detailed therein be received and noted.
(Confidential Agenda paper 20, refers)
RISK AND EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT
There were no further risks inherent in matters dealt with during the meeting not discussed when the Items concerned were considered.
(Confidential Agenda Item 21, refers)
EMERGENCY BUSINESS
There was no emergency business conducted at the meeting.
(Confidential Agenda Item 22, refers)
The meeting ended at 19:10 hours.

Chair......Date....