

SECRETARY'S BOARD

Minutes: 5 April 2016

In the Chair:	Ms Ann Marie Dalton, Secretary of the University	
Present also:	Ms Candace Albornoz, Assistant to the Secretary	Mr Derek Penman, Director of Administration (EPS)
	Mr Mark Adderley, Director of Human Resource Development	Mr Campbell Powrie, Director of Administration (SML)
	Ms Philippa Burrell, Director of Administration (EGIS)	Mr Mike Roch, Director of Information Services
	Mr Darren Cunningham, Director of Administration (MACS)	Mr Martyn Spence, Director of Marketing and Communications
	Mr Malcolm Deans, Director of Campus Services	Mr Paul Travill, Academic Registrar
	Ms Maggie Dunn, Director of Administration (SLS)	Ms Sheelagh Wallace, Director of Administration and Registrar (Dubai)
	Dr Alicia Greated, Director of Research and Enterprise Services	Ms Vivienne White, Director of Administration (TEX)
	Ms Morag Heggie, Director of Administration (EBS)	Ms Janice Yew, Chief Operating Officer (Malaysia)
	Mr Andrew Menzies, Director of Finance	
	In Attendance:	Ms Lisa Herlihy, Clerk
Mr Richard McGookin, Director of Planning (for item M16/44)		
Apologies:	Mr Mike Bates, Director of Student Recruitment	Ms Sue Collier, Director of Governance and Legal Services

The Chair welcomed the following to the meeting:

- Mr Richard McGookin, Director of Planning, who had been invited to present item M16/44 *Student Retention*; and
 - Ms Josie Pilcher, International Recruitment Manager, who was in attendance to represent Student Recruitment.
-

MINUTE REF

M16/40 MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 1 MARCH 2016

The Board received and approved the minutes of the meeting of 1 March 2016.

M16/41 MATTERS ARISING REPORT FOLLOWING THE MEETING OF 1 MARCH 2016

The Board received and noted the matters arising report following the meeting of 1 March 2016.

M16/15 – The Board agreed that Research Grants, which were kept under review by the Research and Knowledge Exchange Board, were not a matter for the Secretary's Board and that this action would be removed from the log.

M16/25 – The Board noted that Career Progression workshops would be held in April 2016. Members would encourage their teams to attend these workshops, which would clarify the processes in place for Professional Services colleagues. The Director of Human Resources and the Secretary of the University would meet outwith the meeting to finalise the content of the workshops.

M16/28 – The Board agreed that the Secretary of the University and the Director of Administration (TEX) would meet to discuss the development of the Student Service Centre at the Borders Campus, which was a priority for the University. The Board also agreed that a number of key stakeholders, including the Academic Registrar, the Director of Administration (TEX) and the Director of Campus Services, would meet to agree a plan for the use of space in the Residences at the Borders Campus.

M16/31 – The Board agreed that members would report to the May 2016 meeting if there were any obstacles to the implementation of the new Heriot-Watt brand. Members would be working to implement the revised brand in their areas over the coming months, with the change to be complete by the beginning of the new academic year.

M16/32 – The Board noted that the University would be taking up membership of the National Centre for Technical Development and Modernisation, and that all relevant colleagues would be able to access training opportunities using this membership. Colleagues would be encouraged to engage with the training available, which would provide valuable development for technical roles. The University would also be discussing opportunities for apprenticeships via the National Centre.

M15/96 – The Board noted that Prevent training was now available for all colleagues as part of a training module on 'Inclusive, Cohesive and Safe Campuses'. This online module was recommended to all colleagues. Tailored training for other groups of colleagues would also be designed and delivered.

M16/17 – The Board agreed that the Director of Student Recruitment would present a report on progress against the Global Recruitment and Marketing Workshop actions at a Secretary's Board meeting in summer 2016.

M15/148 – The Board noted that a session on Information Services would be reintroduced into Staff Induction. The Director of Information Services was in discussion with Organisational Development to ensure materials were revised.

M15/63 – The Board agreed that presentations on the revised structures of Marketing and Communications and Student Recruitment would be presented to the Board in July 2016. The Board also agreed that the Assistant Principal (Fundraising) would be invited to a future meeting of the Board to present on the changes being implemented in Development and Alumni.

M16/42 POLICIES UNDER DEVELOPMENT REPORT (SB/16/)

The Board received and noted the Policies Under Development Report, as presented by the Chair.

M16/43 BUSINESS REPORTED BY THE CHAIR

No business was reported by the Chair.

M16/44 STUDENT RETENTION (PRESENTATIONS)

The Board received and noted presentations on Student Retention by the Director of Planning and the Academic Registrar.

Current Situation

The Director of Planning updated the Board on recent student retention trends at Heriot-Watt, highlighting that the University had historically underperformed against the UK average in this area. Retention was widely used as a measure of performance for HEIs, and

Heriot-Watt had a Key Performance Indicator (KPI) target of 93%. Performance had progressed towards this target in 2012-13 and 2013-14, with retention figures dropping once again in following years.

The Director of Planning emphasised that year-to-year retention data was very robust and identified a clear problem in 2014-15. Current data for 2015-16 did not show a noticeable improvement. The Senate had recently approved a Retention Strategy to address this underperformance, as part of the ongoing drive to ensure a high level of student experience at Heriot-Watt.

The Director of Planning highlighted three groups who were particularly vulnerable in terms of retention:

1. Widening Access students;
2. Mature students (21 years and over); and
3. Overseas students.

A wide range of factors affected retention of these students and the University needed to understand these factors fully in order to improve retention. EGIS and TEX were identified as adverse to average and the Board noted that these Schools had been investigating causes for this trend. The Board acknowledged the difficulty inherent in acquiring accurate data regarding students who discontinued their studies. A number of factors could influence a student's decision but these might not all be identified by a student when discussing their decision.

Retention Strategy

The Academic Registrar provided a summary of the University's Retention Strategy and the Board discussed next steps which would be required. The Strategy emphasised that retention was an issue for all colleagues. Improving retention would require reviewing the student experience and ensuring students were engaged in the University in a variety of ways. This included students who chose to live off-campus and therefore might not access on-campus services and activities in the same way as those students in University accommodation.

The University would be reviewing a number of initiatives currently in place in Schools and expanding those which were successful across campuses. These included:

- reducing impediments which might prevent students from changing programmes. School targets were not impacted by programme changes as they were adjusted accordingly;
- drawing the Combined Studies programme to the attention of student who were uncertain of their preferred area of study. Combined Studies enabled students to tailor their studies according to their personal interests and goals; and
- enhancing the academic mentoring/personal tutor system to build in further support for students, particularly those who were thinking of withdrawing. This would include ensuring students understood the benefits of the mentoring system, as attendance at mentoring meetings was often poor.

The Board agreed that it was crucial to actively manage student retention and take clear steps to remedy the contributing factors, rather than simply monitoring data. All Schools and Services would need to feed into the review and take the necessary measures to improve the overall student experience. The Board agreed that the Academic Registrar would report back to the Secretary's Board regarding next steps for members once further investigation into retention factors had been completed.

The Board discussed how data regarding students' reasons for withdrawing could be collected, noting that improved recording would allow the granularity of cases to be explored. Online student systems would provide the most accurate collection of data, particularly if students were required to provide a reason for withdrawing from their studies at the time of applying to do so. The Board highlighted that personal interaction with

students was also vital, and could be linked to applications for withdrawal so that students were provided with options for support at the time they noted their intention to withdraw. At other institutions this had proven to be an effective method of helping students to continue with their studies.

The Board agreed that the Director of Planning would be invited to attend a Secretary's Board meeting in spring 2017, in order to provide an update on student retention data.

M16/45 REPORTS FROM THE SCHOOLS AND PROFESSIONAL SERVICES (SB/16/46 – SB/16/57)

The Board received and noted the reports from the Schools and Professional Services, presented by the Directors of Administration and Directors of Professional Services.

During the course of this item, the following points were highlighted:

Borders Campus

- that, following a visit from a representative of Ogilvy Noor, TEX were considering the possibility of developing niche courses in combination with Dubai and some of the University's Approved Learning Partners (ALPs);

Campus Services

- that the Estates Information Management System was now under development, with a pilot due to be rolled out to EPS during summer 2016. A report would be presented to the Secretary's Board at a future meeting;
- that the Healthy Working Lives initiative was to be refreshed and a plan presented to the Secretary's Board;
- that the new student residences at the Edinburgh Campus would be completed on time, though the handover to Campus Services from the contractor would be tighter than previously planned;
- that a revised Carbon Management plan draft document had been developed. The Energy and Environment Manager would be invited to a future meeting of the Board to present a brief update on progress;

Dubai Campus

- that Study World had expressed reservations about going ahead with the Dubai Student Services Centre, after advertising for a Manager for the Centre. The Board agreed that the Director of Administration (Dubai) would provide the Secretary of the University with a written explanation of the issues raised by Study World and that the Secretary would take the matter forward;
- that the Director of Administration (Dubai) and the Academic Registrar would be working to organise graduation events in absentia for students at the Dubai Campus for summer 2016 cohorts;

Governance and Legal Services

- that the management of the Security team had been combined with Health and Safety Services to form Safety and Security Services. The former Head of Health and Safety Services would now have responsibility for both teams. A Security and Resilience Manager was also being recruited;

HRD

- that the Migratory Advisory Committee recommendations would not be implemented in their original form, following lobbying by HEIs. The proposed Immigration Skills Charge would be reduced for charities and would be set at zero if the job required a PhD;

- that informal flexible working arrangements would be discussed at a forthcoming meeting of the Board, following completion of the audit of arrangements;
- the Director of HRD tabled data regarding colleagues on 'non-standard' contracts by Directorate/School and gender. The Board agreed that the Director of HRD would circulate the information outwith the meeting and would provide a breakdown of non-standard contracts within Professional Services areas of Schools;
- that Equality and Diversity data would be presented at a future meeting of the Board;

Registry Services

- that the first Annual Student Survey had now closed and Registry were analysing the results, divided by academic year and campus. A report on the results would be presented to the Secretary's Board in summer 2016;

Student Recruitment

- that applications for UG places were down on last year. However, the improvement of conversion activity was improving turnaround of offers and increasing acceptances at this stage in the cycle;
- that PGT applications last year had been unusually high, and the drop in applications for 2016-17 should be taken in this context. PGT applications for IPE had decreased significantly, with around half of this decrease attributed to the downturn in the Oil and Gas sector;
- that, given the factors set out above, the key for improving PGT recruitment was ensuring that offers were made in a timely manner;
- that recruitment in Dubai was on target at both UG and PGT level;
- that recruitment in Malaysia for the April Foundation intake had increased on last year, following intensive recruitment work;
- that virtual open days had recently been held and had been extremely successful. It was planned to hold further sessions in the future; and
- that a full report detailing the University's Clearing strategy would be presented to the Board in May 2016.

M16/46 FEEDBACK FROM FACE-TO-FACE BRIEFINGS (SB/16/58)

The Board received and noted the feedback received from the Face-to-Face briefings, presented by the Chair.

The Board noted that feedback had generally been positive, with colleagues appreciating the opportunity to find out more about the business of the University Executive. The Chair advised that all Schools and Services were asked to submit feedback to the Clerk each month, to be reported at meetings of the Secretary's Board and then the University Executive.

M16/47 GROUP FINANCIAL DASHBOARD (SB/16/59)

The Board received and noted the Group Financial Dashboard, presented by the Director of Finance.

The Director of Finance highlighted that the surplus for the financial year to-date stood at £7.5 million, with lower than expected income being balanced by reduced expenditure. It was expected that the surplus would rise to £9.6 million by the end of the financial year.

The Board agreed that an updated Dashboard would be circulated to members. It was also agreed that the Director of Finance would, at a later meeting, present to the Secretary's Board regarding the Five-Year Plan, which was currently being developed with the Vice-Principal.

M16/48 QUARTERLY COMPLAINTS REPORT (SB/16/60)

The Board received, and recommended for onward transmission, the Quarterly Complaints Report, presented by the Academic Registrar.

The Board noted that there were two outstanding complaints on the report. One of these, based in EGIS, was a complicated case and continued to be investigated. The other, based in EPS, was a relatively new complaint and EPS were currently carrying out an investigation.

M16/49 SARP UPDATE (SB/16/61)

The Board received and noted an update on the SARP (Student Administration Revitalisation Project), presented by the Academic Registrar.

The Academic Registrar highlighted that three themed workshops would be held in April 2016 as part of the SARP. These would cover the following themes:

- **Beginning:** Recruitment, Marketing, Admissions and Welcome;
- **Transition:** Student Administration, Multi-mode/multi-campus, Communications and Retention, Mentoring, Timetabling, Fees; and
- **Exit:** Marks and Grades, Awards and Progression, Graduations.

Sessions for colleagues at the Malaysia Campus were currently being planned, and the SARP team were considering the best way for Dubai colleagues to feed in to discussions.

The Board noted that demonstrations for the new admissions system were taking place and it was expected that a decision would be made on 11 April 2016, in order that rollout of the new system could begin in May 2016.

M16/50 FORWARD AGENDA PLAN (SB/16/63)

The Board received and noted the Forward Agenda Plan, presented by the Chair.

M16/51 PROJECTS REGISTER (SB/16/64)

The Board received and noted the Projects Register, presented by the Chair.

The Chair highlighted that the Office 365 for Staff project had been closed since the March 2016 meeting of the Board.

Date of next meeting: Tuesday 3rd May 2016