

BOARD OF GOVERNORS

Minutes of the unreserved meeting of the Board of Governors on Tuesday 22 September 2020 from 4 - 7pm via remote video conference

Present	In attendance	Apologies
Andrew Summers (Chair) Andy Cook Kion Ahadi Zaid Al-Zaidy Shoku Amirani Kate Gregory Helen Higson Jon Kingsbury Katharina Koall Fernando Modino Lisa Mooney Alex Phillips Marta Phillips Noeline Sanders Samantha Silver Jo Stimpson Jon Walmsley Lee Wilkinson Stephen Woodford	Margaret Bird- Director of HR & OD Phil MacDonald (Interim Director of Finance) John O'Boyle- Director of Compliance Gary Pritchard- Pro Vice Chancellor (Learning and Teaching and Student Experience) Drew Robinson - Director Projects & Operations Emma Shailer- Director of Student Recruitment & Success Lawrence Zeegen- Pro Vice Chancellor (Research, Innovation and Enterprise) Maureen Skinner – Clerk to the Board of Governors (minutes) Geraint Cunnick (Head of Photography) for Digital Photography presentation Pippa Hogg (Creative Lab Head of Studio) for Degree Show presentation Laurence Lartey (Creative Lab Director) for Degree Show presentation Louise Prideaux (Deputy Dean) for NSS item	

20/1268	<p>Before the formal part of the meeting, presentations were made to the board on the Photography courses by Geraint Cunnick, and on the 2020 Degree Show by Laurence Lartey and Pippa Hogg. The presenters were thanked for their interesting and informative presentations and congratulated on the work which their teams were doing.</p> <p>The Chair welcomed members to the meeting of the Board. In particular, he welcomed the new members of the Board of Governors, Kion Ahadi, Zaid Al-Zaidy, Shoku Amirani, Kate Gregory, Noeline Sanders, Lee Wilkinson and Stephen Woodford, as well as the new Interim Finance Director, Phil MacDonald, to their first meeting.</p>
	DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS
20/1269	<p>Members were reminded to declare any interests, personal or financial, that might relate to the business shown on the agenda for the meeting. No such declarations were made.</p>
	MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING AND MATTERS ARISING
20/1270	<p>Minute 20/1194: Report on diversity to next ODRemCom and included in VC update. Minute 20/1198: Progress on Mental Health and Wellbeing for students included in VC update. Minute 20/1218: Ethic Framework on the agenda. Minute 20/1222: Lease to be signed c9 October. Minute 20/1245: NSS report on the agenda. Minute 20/1246: Report on Complaints to November meeting. Minute 20/1246: Report in RSU report. Minute 20/1254: Meeting of sub-set of Board on 10 September 2020. Minute 20/1254: Digital First update on agenda. Minute 20/1262: Report on Recruitment included in VC update. Minute 20/1265: Terms of Reference for Governance and Nominations under review. Minute 20/1265: Governor attendance at Academic Board formalised. Minute 20/1267: Schedule of meetings includes Academic Board meetings.</p>
	CHAIR'S UPDATE
20/1271	<p>The Chair congratulated the Vice Chancellor on his appointment as permanent VC.</p>
20/1272	<p>The Chair reported on the successful appointment process of seven new members of the Board, which has greatly increased the Board's expertise and diversity. A new governor induction had taken place and individual meetings with the Vice Chancellor and members of the Executive were being scheduled. A final list of committee memberships had been agreed.</p>
20/1273	<p>Whilst the published Corporate Strategy 2018-25 stands up well, it needs updating to incorporate Digital First. This is planned to be done, with consultancy help from Nous, by the end of the year with input from all board members.</p> <p>Action: board members to be contacted by Nous as part of the strategy refresh.</p>
20/1274	<p>There is little to note relating to higher education within government policy, although a review of NSS has been notified, and the COVID situation remains fluid.</p>

20/1275	There was a query from the President of the Students' Union on safety measures in the building and the extent to which further policing of compliance might be required.
	ACTING VC REPORT
20/1276	The Vice Chancellor report covered a number of key items including recruitment, student experience and financial viability. Notable achievements include: home/EU recruitment up 13%; PG taught experience survey 93% satisfaction; and graduate outcomes 90%. The year-end financial result showed a small surplus. COVID-19 poses risk to international recruitment, alongside the rest of the sector. Overall NSS outcomes are disappointing, although there were some significant improvements; an action plan has been developed, which will be discussed later on the agenda. A new Interim Finance Director has been appointed, Phil MacDonald, and work has progressed to mobilise the Digital First Strategy, also later on the agenda.
20/1277	<p>In discussion the following points were raised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undergraduate recruitment positive, with good clearing results and focus on local postcodes • International students may opt to study at home • The imminence of the lease signing for the Institute of Creativity and Technology, and the issue of any remaining legal queries, including agreed wording relating to use of facilities by other Design District tenants • OfS licence requirements: the impact of the amended assessment regime and the statement on degree outcomes • An increase in the number of academic appeals was noted • Whether recruitment was impacted by NSS results, and whether class size had an effect on NSS scores • Class size appears to be most relevant to NSS • Diversity of new student intake and diversity of new staff appointments • Whether there has been a higher percentage of BAME staff leavers and possible greater impact of COVID-19 on BAME staff • Encouraging to see mental health and wellbeing strategy for students and link to specific Vice Chancellor task forces • Possible support from governors for KPI dashboard methodology • Sustainability an important issue for student recruitment: strategy in progress and an Environmental Report will be presented to the January Board meeting • No real impact of the delay to the start of term but helpful to space different cohort start dates <p>Action: Impact of the amended assessment regime to Academic Board</p> <p>Action: Statement on degree outcomes to joint Board/Academic Board</p> <p>Action: Environmental Report to January Board meeting</p>
	RSU REPORT
20/1278	<p>The RSU report was received. The SU were closely involved in designing the anonymised reporting tool. The SU have held Zoom meetings for the Student Forum. There is a student podcast as well as an Instagram Gallery of student work.</p> <p>It was noted that the role of the Students' Union was particularly important for the NSS.</p>

	DIGITAL FIRST
20/1279	A presentation was made by the Vice Chancellor showing details of the extensive procurement process. Ravensbourne aims to build internal capabilities in delivering hybrid programmes of learning. Strategic learning from the process revealed a number of strategic risks including: regulatory compliance (OfS, HESA etc); data privacy (GDPR et al); intellectual property; lack of control over IT development; and the costs and challenges involved in integrating with campus based IT systems. Thus the business case has been revised and updated to move away from a joint venture and towards a fee for service with potential commercial partners. The two companies still involved are Mastered and Skills Union. A revised business case will be presented to the October Chairs' meeting which will include the base case update, partnership development, new scope and growth ambitions.
20/1280	<p>In discussion the following points were raised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The need for a 3-5 year base case for business as usual • The approach to the technology build • The decision to move away from joint venture seems right due to, <i>inter alia</i>, the regulatory issues as well as challenges of management of JV • What work had been done on the market for short courses • Consideration of various platforms eg Future Learn • Need for detailed planning ie 'nuts and bolts' • Possibility of CPD for professionals ie not credit bearing courses <p>Action: Digital First update to October Chairs' meeting to cover business case update, partnership developments, revised scope and growth ambitions</p> <p>Action: Further market research on Short Courses within Digital First to next Board meeting</p>
	NATIONAL STUDENTS SURVEY
20/1281	The NSS presentation was introduced by the Vice Chancellor, the PVC (Academic) and the two Deputy Deans. The paper contained the detailed analysis of the results along with a report from Seymour Research, which analysed individual student comments.
20/1282	It was clear that, whilst the overall score had not improved, within that result six courses had achieved scores in the 90%+ range. It was noted that the creation of Digital First had been created out of a desire to transform the curriculum and that NSS is itself something of a blunt instrument.
20/1283	Issues which emerged from the analysis included some structural issues but also problems with both teamwork and leadership. This latter issue was particularly evident within the lowest scoring courses. Detailed analysis also revealed the strength of the learning community which had been hampered by organisational problems, poor communications and certain curriculum changes. Whilst the deeper causes of NSS results are inevitably complex, strong management of leadership and performance of faculty will be given priority within the action plan, with a series of staff development events.
20/1284	<p>In discussion the following points were raised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The possibility of a matrix of all action plans • The overlap with the task force on retention

20/1285	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The importance of feeding back to students on actions taken • Possibility of a mid year or intermittent survey eg a Pulse survey • Where there were big swings in outcomes, what might be the cause(s) <p>It was noted that this situation had happened previously and there was a danger of a multiplicity of action plans. Priority would be given to low scoring courses which, also, were typically the larger courses. Some structural management actions had been identified. A more strategic approach was welcomed.</p> <p>Action: Progress on action plans to improve NSS results to be included in VC report to all future board meetings</p>
FINANCE UPDATE	
20/1286	<p>The Interim Director of Finance introduced the Budget paper. It was noted that the balanced business as usual budget presented on 15 July 2020 was overlaid with £1,067k Digital First investment. This budget paper included appendices covering capital investment, income and expenditure, cash flow and the balance sheet. Liquidity is net £11.7m (£15.2m less £3.7m bad debt) which is acceptable to the bank. Whilst it is possible to get back to a 'break even' position, it will be a challenge.</p>
20/1287	<p>This is the first time Ravensbourne had conducted a zero based pay budget exercise. Between 60-70% of expenditure is on staff costs. The budget is critically dependent on student recruitment growth both UG and PG, improvements in student retention and rigorous budgetary control. Integrated planning for the next five years with forecasts will be presented in February 2021. Capital expenditure is budgeted at £750k per annum. There are issues with the LGPS service charge (£355k) due to COVID-19. The budget is supported by the Executive.</p>
20/1288	<p>In discussion the following points were raised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The increase in staff costs has grown alarmingly • Has a 'worst case' budget scenario been calculated • Investment is noted but there is a need to control costs • The need to focus on cost control • The need to look at pension costs • Suggest comparison with other institutions • Need to ensure bank covenants are met <p>A 'root and branch' analysis will be presented in February 2021, including 'worst case' scenarios.</p> <p>Action: revised Budget 20-21 at break-even agreed in principle subject to confirmation at November board meeting once recruitment figures are confirmed</p> <p>Action: Five Year Financial Forecasts to go to January 2021 Board of Governors for approval before submission to OfS on 1 February 2021</p>
ETHICS FRAMEWORK	

20/1289	Due to time constraints, the draft Ethics Framework was deferred. Members were invited to send comments to the Clerk. Action: Comments on draft Ethics Framework to Clerk
	FUTURE MEETINGS
20/1290	The Schedule of meetings for 2020-21 had been expanded to include Academic Board meeting dates. Committee Chairs were invited to review the schedule of business attached and send any comments to the Clerk. Action: Comments from Committee Chairs on schedule of Board and committee business 2020-21