

**Notes from the Group strategy day
Held at 10am on 23 September 2021
At Avonmouth House, SE1**

Present

- Board of Governors: Jerry Cope (Chair), Michael Cutbill (Vice-Chair), David Phoenix (Vice Chancellor & CEO), John Cole, Ruchika Kumar, Mark Lemmon, Nicki Martin, Jeremy Parr,

Rashda Rana, Deepa Shah and Vinay Tanna
- Co-opted member: Kate Stanton-Davies
- Additional members of South Bank Colleges Board: Ruth Farwell (Chair), Sue Dare, Moriam Folawiyo, Shakira Martin, Mee Ling Ng and Andrew Owen
- Additional members of South Bank Academies Board: Hitesh Tailor (Chair), James Blastland and Tony Giddings
- Members of the Group Executive: Tara Dean, Provost, Richard Flatman, Group Chief Financial Officer, Deborah Johnston, PVC (Academic Framework), Nicole Louis, Chief Customer Officer, Fiona Morey, Executive Principal of Lambeth College & PVC (Compulsory & FE), James Stevenson, Group Secretary & Clerk to the Board of Governors, Warren Turner, PVC Health and Social Care
- Key Group colleagues: Michael Broadway, Deputy University Secretary, Ciara Carroll, Governance Assistant (SBA), Dan Cundy, Executive Principal of South Bank Academies, Kerry Johnson, Governance Officer, Karen McLernon, Head of Performance Analysis, Jacqueline Mutibwa, Governance Officer (SBC), Dominique Phipp, Governance Assistant, Ralph Sanders, Group Director of Financial Planning and Reporting, and Mike Simmons, Group Director of Strategy and Corporate Affairs
- Apologies:** Steve Balmont, Duncan Brown, Maureen Dalziel, Nigel Duckers, Jacqui Dyer, Peter Fidler, Paul Ivey, Hilary McCallion, Chris Mallaband, Marcelle Moncrieffe-Johnson, Lesley Morrison, Rob Orr, Tony Roberts and Max Smith

Welcome

The chair welcomed LSBU, SBA and SBC Board members to the meeting.

The chair welcomed James Blastland, Tara Dean, Ruchika Kumar and Karen McLernon to their first group strategy meeting.

General update

The Group CEO updated the meeting on the external environment.

The meeting noted potential government policy changes to higher and further education and the impact on the group, including a lifelong learning loan entitlement, level 3 qualifications, funding by block and standalone Higher Technical Qualifications.

The meeting noted potential external risks to the group including the potential loss of BTech qualifications (to be replaced by T-levels), increasing pension costs, the government's 'levelling up' agenda and the implications for London-based organisations, and post-pandemic national debt levels.

The meeting noted the importance of delivering high quality courses within the group and improving to Ofsted 'Good' across the group.

Some of the biggest risks to the group were noted as quality of provision (as measured by Ofsted for SBC and SBA, and the national league tables for LSBU), finances and ensuring investment facilitates better student outcomes and is 'future-proofed'.

The meeting noted that other HE organisations have started to develop a less integrated group structure model. The Group CEO was confident that LSBU's model would be stronger in the long-term if its advantages can start to be realised in the short-term.

The meeting discussed the challenges of delivering the group strategy including:

- Competition from other providers and the importance of quickly improving the reputation of the group;
- Improving student recruitment (linked to improving reputation);
- Developing the workforce to have the right competency, capability and capacity to deliver;
- Improving employer involvement with the group; and
- Improving measures relating to student outcomes across the group.

LSBU group update

LSBU

The Provost and the Pro Vice Chancellor (Academic Framework) updated the meeting on LSBU.

The meeting noted improvements in the international league tables which mainly focus on research performance. The meeting noted declines in the performance in domestic league tables which were largely driven by changes in the measure used to assess employability, and LSBU's performance in the National Student Survey (NSS).

The meeting noted the challenges for LSBU with the new Graduate Outcomes measure and performance thresholds that would be introduced by the Office for Students (OfS). Short-term and medium-term interventions are planned to address this.

The Provost's priorities for 2021/22 would be improving student progression, student outcomes and student experience (as measured by the NSS).

SBA

The Executive Principal updated the meeting on SBA.

Work is progressing on setting out SBA's distinctiveness by focusing on the employability of its students, including providing advice and guidance linked to professional networks, providing access to opportunity, and developing students' social and cultural capital.

The meeting noted the challenges for SBA, including its expansion plans which would drive capacity for improvement of student attainment; local demographic changes; competition from well-established MATs across London; and a continuing perception that technical education is seen as second best.

A focus for SBA for 2021/22 was identifying feeder primary schools to join SBA. Opportunities for SBA included using its reputation to drive recruitment, exploiting its potential to be at the forefront of technical education, innovating on curriculum extension, and pursuing intra-group opportunities.

SBC

The Executive Principal updated the meeting on SBC.

The meeting noted the ambitious and exciting vision for SBC which included the opening of the new campus at Vauxhall and the redeveloped campus at Clapham and the potential this development has for transforming SBC's offer to learners and the community.

Challenges for SBC included student recruitment, demonstrating improvements in the quality of provision (an Ofsted inspection is imminently expected) and finances. In addition, ten days of strike action is planned for the autumn term.

Risk

The meeting discussed the main finance and estates risks to the Group. These included:

- student recruitment;
- affordability of capital investment;
- funding the technical college development (at Vauxhall);
- estates utilisation; and
- cashflow management.

The meeting discussed the main educational risks to the Group. These included:

- not integrating the group fast enough;
- management stretch and capacity;
- articulating the intra-group pathways to learners and employers;
- creating opportunities for collaboration within the group; and
- employer engagement with the group concept.

The meeting requested focused KPIs on the main risks to be overseen by the relevant Board in the group.

Summary

The Chair summarised the meeting. From the discussions, there appeared to be a good understanding of the issues facing the group by the Group Executive. The Boards expressed their continuing support for the strategic direction and the group concept.

The mission, funding and distinctiveness of the group remained important priorities.

Conclusions from the day:

1. There needs to be clarity on how the issues raised today are implemented quickly and effectively.

2. A key to success and sustainability will be how well all Boards and the Group Executive are more agile and flexible to respond to the changing external environment.

Both these actions would continue to be considered by the Boards and the Group Executive over the academic year.

Members of the Boards of SBA and SBC left the meeting

Project Leap update

With Rosie Holden, Sue Turnbull and PwC

The meeting received an update on Project Leap and an on-screen demonstration of the new customer relationship management (CRM) system.

The PVC confirmed that ethical considerations had been an important factor in the design of the system.

Members of the Board welcomed the update and the progress of the project.