

Meeting of the Board of Governors

4.00 pm on Thursday, 21 May 2020
via MS Teams

*3.30pm: Pre-Board presentation on the impact of coronavirus

Supplement

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Date of next meeting
4.00 pm on Thursday, 16 July 2020

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	CONFIDENTIAL
Paper title:	Academic governance assurance
Board/Committee:	Board of Governors
Date of meeting:	21 May 2020
Author(s):	Michael Broadway, Deputy University Secretary
Sponsor(s):	Pat Bailey, Provost
Purpose:	For Information
Recommendation:	The Board is requested to note the update on academic governance assurance.

Executive summary

In response to a finding from the 2019 governance effectiveness review, an update on the review of both assurance and reporting from the Academic Board to the Board is provided.

The Board is requested to note the update.

Academic governance assurance – update May 2020

Action from Governance Effectiveness Review, 2019:

“To review both assurance and reporting from the Academic Board to the Board to enable greater visibility of the work done by the Academic Board”.

Actions to address ‘assurance’:

- 1) Head of Quality (MG) mapping quality assurance processes against OfS conditions B1-B6 (which cover quality, reliable standards and positive outcomes for all students) – this should help define what reports are necessary to AcBd (or sub-cttees (QSC, RsCom and Student Experience Committee)) for it to gain necessary assurance
- 2) Review remit, ToR and work plan of Academic Board and committees based on mapping exercise

Actions to address ‘reporting’

- 3) To appoint an independent governor to be an observer on the academic board. To ‘pair’ this independent governor with PVC (Education).
- 4) Annual Education report from Academic Board to Board (Nov each year) based on assurance received during the year. To cover:
 - a. Chief Examiner’s Report;
 - b. summary of courses approved during the year;
 - c. performance against academic KPIs (covering conditions B1-6); and
 - d. student experience as measured by the NSS.
- 5) Annual research and enterprise report to the Board (March Board meeting)

Background notes

Key questions to answer action from Governance Effectiveness review on academic assurance reporting to Board of Governors:

- 1) How does the Academic Board know that academic governance is “adequate and effective” (as required by the OfS public interest governance principles)?
- 2) How does the Academic Board assure the Board that academic governance is “adequate and effective”?

Governance team met Chair of Academic Board, Chair of Research Committee and Head of Quality to discuss approach.

1. How quality of taught curriculum is overseen:

- 3 key processes:
 - Validation of new courses (includes an external expert on panel) (and periodic re-validation)
 - Annual quality review (internal by Schools and overseen by School Academic Standards Committees)
 - External examiners
- Institutional examiner’s annual report to Quality and Standards Committee (QSC)
- Devolved approach to quality
- Annual report of research committee to Academic Board – covered all in ToR
- Need to separate quality decisions from business decisions

2. How research integrity is overseen:

- Research concordat – annual report on compliance to Research Committee
- Oversight of 15 research centres and 30 research groups and REF
- Oversight of research ethics and Research Board of Study
- Annual report from ResCom to AcBd

3. N.B. KEF will be covered by REI

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Appendix to Leap business case paper

Extract of MPIC minutes of 2 April 2020

5. “LEAP business case and Workpackage 3.5

With David Learmont, Project Director.

The committee discussed the Project LEAP business case in the context of potential changes to LSBU’s risk and financial profile resulting from the impact of the national situation in relation to coronavirus.

The CFO reminded the committee that the strategic business case remained strong and enabled the alignment of costs to strategy, with a revised payback between 3.1 and 4.6 years, following which there would be significant financial return. The CFO recognised that the key question would now be affordability and reported the majority of the project cashflow would be required in financial years 2020/21 and 2021/22, now a volatile period in the sector.

The committee noted that Workpackage 3.5, at a cost of £1.01 million, enabled the momentum of the project to continue up to the Board meeting of 21st May 2020, pending final consideration of the business case.

Governors discussed in detail the principles of the business case, in particular noting market analysis of the full time undergraduate opportunity. The CCO reported that even a modest uplift in applications was a reasonable assumption, crucially the project would improve conversion to enrolment. Governors requested the market analysis summary to be circulated to provide further context.

In relation to affordability of the project, a governor queried how recruitment would be increased if the project did not proceed. The executive considered that growth would be ultimately hindered by legacy systems.

It was noted that there may be scope for negotiation with potential suppliers for the Customer Relationship Management system and student experience layer to spread expenditure into future years, as opposed to the main spend taking place during 2020/21 and 2021/22. The executive would review the cost and cashflow profile prior to the next meeting.

After careful consideration of the executive’s recommendations, the committee:

- 1) Continued to support the submission of the revised LEAP business case to the meeting of the Board of Governors on 21 May 2020, for it to consider

alongside FPR's review of the financial scenarios of the 2020/21 budget, in the light of the current national situation resulting from coronavirus. This case represented future total programme expenditure of £23.2m, taking total spend including sunk costs to £32m. This was in line with the previously reported indicative budget envelope of £32m. There would be a further opportunity to review the committee's recommendation at its next meeting on 7 May 2020; and

- 2) Authorised the executive, subject to its review of financial scenarios and if it considers necessary, to approve expenditure of £1.01m (within the total programme expenditure budget) on Workpackage 3.5, to enable the Leap programme to continue to progress up to the Board meeting of 21 May 2020.

The committee thanked the Project LEAP team for their hard work in preparing the business case”.

Extract of draft MPIC minutes of 7 May 2020 (as approved by the Chair):

5. “Project LEAP update

At its meeting of 2 April 2020, MPIC gave detailed consideration to the proposed project LEAP business case. The committee had requested further discussion at today's meeting, so that it could take into account the review by Finance, Planning & Resources Committee of the impact of the current national coronavirus emergency and the potential financial scenarios for the LSBU Group, cashflow and financial requirements (minute 6 below sets out the detail).

The CFO advised that Project LEAP remained affordable in terms of cashflow. Additionally, the project plan was flexible enough to re-prioritise expenditure and adopt a phased approach to specific deliverables, but the project cost would increase by £2.5m and the overall cost to £34.5m. The potential for reduced costs through commercial negotiation was also noted.

The committee supported the delivery of Project LEAP but recommended a cautious approach and a flatter cost profile, given the significant economic uncertainty due to the current national crisis. The CFO responded by summarising the revised cashflow scenarios, which included the best estimates for home and international recruitment for 2020/21, considered in detail by Finance, Planning & Resources.

Further caution was expressed in relation to the risk of a second wave of coronavirus infection in autumn 2020 and the impact on the campus and students

Following the detailed discussion, the committee approved the following recommendation to the Board meeting on 21 May 2020, to be included with the business case:

“Based on its review of affordability, and taking into account the latest, updated cashflow forecasts, MPIC also recommends (noting that this potentially adds £2.4m to total programme costs), that the Board approves lengthening the LEAP programme, in order to flatten the expenditure curve at this time of considerable financial uncertainty and cashflow pressure”.

In addition, the committee noted progress in LEAP work-package 3.5, which the Executive had approved on 8 April 2020”.

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