

# Minutes

Subject:	Trustee Board
Location:	Online
Time & Date:	9 <sup>th</sup> November 2021 – 5pm – 7pm
Status:	<b>[Closed]</b>
Author:	Abbie Mulcairn

**Present (online):** Ayane Hida (Chair) (FTO), Lizzie Payne (LP) (FTO), Ivo Garnham (IG) (FTO), Aaron Campbell (AC) (FTO), Jeremy Clayton (JC) (External), Patrycja Poplawska (PP) (PTO), Lucy Hawker (LH) (Student), Serene Shilbi Sexton (SS) (PTO), Bradley Foster (BF) (External), Anwar Azari (AA) (External), Frances Fay (FF) (External), Adrian Ashby

**Chair:** Ayande Hida (FTO)

**In attendance:** Toby Cunningham (TCu) (CEO), Caroline Wilson (CW) (HR Director)

**Apologies:** None received

## Agenda:

- [\*\*TB1174\*\*](#)      **Statements from the Chair**
- [\*\*TB1175\*\*](#)      **Declarations of Interest**
- [\*\*TB1176\*\*](#)      **Action Points from previous meeting and Matters Arising**
- [\*\*TB1177\*\*](#)      **New Academic year**
- [\*\*TB1178\*\*](#)      **Board membership**
- [\*\*TB1179\*\*](#)      **Chair**
- [\*\*TB1180\*\*](#)      **Frequency of the Board**
- [\*\*TB1181\*\*](#)      **Any Other Business**
- [\*\*TB1182\*\*](#)      **Time, Date and Place of the next meeting**

16th December 2021

#### **TB1174      Statements from the Chair**

Ayane (AH) welcomed the meeting and stated that since the previous Governance Coordinator had left, the meeting had no Clerk present. Ayane noted that the meeting would therefore be recorded and minuted after the meeting.

#### **TB1175      Declarations of Interest**

No conflicts of interest were declared.

#### **TB1176      Action Points from previous meeting and Matters Arising**

AH noted that there were no minutes to approve from the previous meeting as they are not finalised. Ayane shared the draft minutes and JC asked whether there was an action log. AH confirmed that the Clerk that there is usually an Action Log kept by the Chair but that it was not currently active.

TCu noted in Matters Arising that Abdul was voted onto the Risk and Oversight Committee but has now left and been replaced by Bradley and as such a new Trustee needs to be voted onto the ROC. AH confirmed that this would be picked up in the AOB.

#### **TB1177      New Academic year**

TCu delivered key updates.

Starting off the new year, this is the first year that the University had a week 0 with no teaching where students could transition. TCu noted that this is something the Union had been lobbying for for years. The consensus is that the week went well and teaching staff were happy with the transition and the events that were held. General consensus is that week went well and that campus felt alive and welcoming. Some feedback from the University's survey showed that some students hadn't integrated well, but indicated that students who got involved in events outside their school reported much higher levels of belonging.

TCu noted that the Uni invested in new timetabling software which caused a lot of issues. He noted that some issues had been resolved quickly following lobbying work by IG.

TCu noted that the campus development programme included a plan to build a 'Sky Tower' in the carpark and refurbish the teaching wall. The teaching wall project has been pushed back but is still planned to happen. The consequence of this is that teaching space will be reduced and other spaces will need to be utilised. More space will be freed up in other places on campus.

TCu noted that the Uni's plan is to deliver face to face learning wherever possible but to maintain a blended learning approach using online where necessary. There is no record of how much teaching is taking place online vs. in person as decision making is devolved to schools. There is no tracking across the sector so there is no way to tell how UEA compares to other university's in this regard.

Students seem generally satisfied with teaching, but finding timetabling and administration more difficult.

TCu noted that the University still has a mask policy in place and are working to communicate this policy better to students. There are mixed views amongst teaching staff as to whether teachers should be wearing masks, but the UCU has been pushing for mask wearing due to health and safety concerns.

TCu confirmed that the results of the UCU strike ballots had come in. There were two ballots – one for pensions and one for the four campaigns. UEA met the threshold for pensions and voted 75% in favour of strike action and 85% in favour of all action short of a strike, but didn't meet the threshold for the other four campaigns. There is an internal UCU meeting next week to determine what the next steps are. There has been nothing to confirm that there will be any strike action before Christmas.

TCu noted there were a lot of concerns around students getting spiked and that they had been looking at advice from NUS, Good Night In and other groups to see how to make our venues safer. Timetabling and spiking had been the two biggest stories of the term for students.

TCu noted to JC that on a finance side, we are about £88k ahead of budget after the first two months, but that this presents an overly optimistic view as staff implications have caused some of this saving due to staff leaving and not being replaced over summer. When new staff are in place, then the budget will rise back to expectation. Anecdotal feedback from venues is that trading has been positive with spend per head being up.

AH added that the University often makes decisions without consulting PGR and as such AH has been asked to be added to more of these meetings to ensure representation for PGRs.

IG added that course rep recruitment had finalised, and that training is currently in progress and this should result in more feedback about teaching. IG also noted that Education Committee was coming up, which is the best place for feedback around blended learning. IG also noted that the issues with timetabling meant staff capacity was moved over to fix this, leaving a gap in other areas of administration. IG confirmed that the Uni is happy for this to be communicated to students. IG has been able to put across student frustration to the University Timetable Review group and hopes this will lead to less issues in the future.

JC asked how it was going with the charitable side of the Union's work and whether we were meeting demand effectively. JC asked about budgets in uea(su) venues and whether spiking or other safety concerns were having an impact.

TCu noted that student interest in events is stretching staff capacity in some areas. There is a rigorous risk assessment process in place, but this was being reviewed due to the uptake in interest. Overall, there are no major concerns in this area. Advice Centre are busy but within capacity due to adding additional staff. Student Voice team is entirely new so although not in the usual place with

understanding what's going on on the ground, the reps are still feeding back and new staff are energetic and doing well.

TCu stated that risks discussed at the last Board meeting that has carried over is the risk around security staff. SIA staff couldn't renew their badge and staff capacity has diminished due to lack of interest. The venue capacity has been limited due to both Covid and lack of security staff. TCu noted the head of security has done a brilliant job keeping the team together and motivated. TCu and CW might have to look at raising pay in order to secure adequate staff. Covid secure checks are still happening on the door and these are working well and not causing issues with the queue. Slightly more difficult with non-student events where the public is involved as they aren't up to speed on the regulations.

TCu noted that the number of covid positive cases on campus had not exceeded 30 at any given time. Confident that LCR is not a covid spreading event.

LH asked about the survey which stated some student's didn't feel indicated and why they felt this way. TCu stated that this year has been difficult to transition for lots of reason, including students not having the confidence of A Level results and exams resulting in imposter syndrome.

AA asked about imposter syndrome and noted that this is especially apparent for mature students. AA asked whether we could get access to the raw data. TCu confirmed there is a data sharing issue with Tableau. TCu confirmed he would chase and that the union would be doing its own survey. There is work ongoing to secure data sharing between the union and university in the future.

AP – TCu to share pulse survey results around induction with Board if able to access

### **TB1178     Board membership**

AH has been working with CW to recruit one more external trustee from a HR perspective as this is currently missing from the Board. AH asked whether we need one more or whether the Board should wait.

JC noted that after being on the Board, his feeling is that that the board is a bit stretched for externals and extra capacity would be useful and that two extra additions would be good if possible.

TCu noted that the board needs to consider the balance between students, FTOs and externals and ensure that it doesn't fall in favour of one group. TCu noted there would be implications on how student trustees were recruited following the democracy review. TCu suggested bringing a paper to a future board meeting suggesting ways it could reform to be in line with the democracy review.

LP noted that its important for the Trustee Board to be student led and too many externals may unbalance the leadership of the SU. This being said more trustees could spread out the load and not put too much onus on each trustee.

SS noted that the democracy review (DR) would maintain a SOC like structure and the impact of the DR shouldn't be huge when it comes to student recruitment to the board.

AA agreed that the student balance should be maintained. AA noted that things like disciplinary's and lengthy investigations were taking a lot of time, and more expertise in this area from trustees could be really useful in this regard to save time for the board.

TCu noted that there was currently nothing in place to ensure the diversity of the board makeup. This might be something for the Board to review in the future. IG noted that the board attempted to elect a new deputy chair at the previous meeting, and having that role filled with be important. IG noted having two more external trustees might be useful in this regard.

SS noted that although diversification of the board would be useful, student engagement across the board needs to be focused on, and if there is a diversity problem then wider solutions need to be sought. Roles should be advertised in more diverse places and board should seek ways to gain wider trust of students.

AP – CW to circulate the skills matrix to board members

#### **TB1179      Chair**

The Board agreed to retain AH as interim Chair of the Board.

#### **TB1180      Frequency of the Board**

AH noted that the Board meets four times a year, and that other SU's Board's meet more frequently, usually once every two months. AH noted one of the Trustees has suggested increasing the frequency of the meetings, which hopefully would make each meeting shorter and reduce the need for emergency meetings.

JC confirmed that this was their suggestion. As an external trustee, JC felt that catching up four times a year doesn't give them an accurate depiction of the running of the SU throughout the year. The Uni has monthly updates from the VC and has a better connection between council members and leadership. JC not suggesting monthly meetings, but something in the middle could be good. Having six meetings rather than four reduces the burden for each meeting and enables the Board to work on other things (for example, an away day).

FF echoed JC thoughts and agreed that current format of meetings on Teams and if Board is to stay online then more frequent meetings would be good. Suggested each meeting could have a topic of discussion which the Board could 'deep dive' into rather than a rolling agenda. FF asked whether this is the format that would remain for the rest of the academic year, or if the Board might move back to in person.

AH noted that as a Chair it is difficult to find time where everyone is available. AH hopes for some in person meetings in the future.

AA noted that at Essex SU they had Board meetings 6 times a year. This wouldn't be a huge commitment and especially on Teams, this wouldn't be any harder than the current set up of quarterly.

AP - The Board agreed to move to meeting 6 times a year (every other month).  
AH to send round new schedule of meetings.

## **TB1181 Any Other Business**

### **AOB – 1**

AH raised that uea(su) has only 1.5 people in Senior Leadership roles. AH asked TCu what he thought about this, and whether he had any thoughts on increasing this number.

TCu noted that in 2018 he presented a structure for a senior leadership team of 4 people. A staff member was appointed into one of these roles, and the Union then ran into a finance problem recruiting the rest. The union has three assistant directors who aren't paid at the level of directors, for the reason of knowledge, skills, experience and intent. TCu noted that current assistant directors don't want the level of responsibility of being directors yet. The options are: finding the money to appoint additional directors above the assistants, or taking a longer term approach to develop current assistants to take up the positions in a few years. The second approach is the one currently taking. The board deferred future decisions to a later date. TCu will gladly have more senior staff added to the leadership team.

LP asked how much longer the current assistant directors would need to reach the level of becoming a director. TCu noted that a training programme was being worked on for management staff that will run for two years on average. Covid has delayed some staff's progress in getting to grips with their roles. TCu suggested that it might be six months to a year for the two assistant directors to move up.

### **AOB – 2**

AC raised the question of whether AHRC should provide the Board with dates of future meetings, and whether these meetings should be open for other trustees to join. AC invited the Board to feedback.

IG noted that this would be a good idea, and would be beneficial for ROC to do this too. TCu noted that members of union council are supposed to be on some of these committees and nobody ran for these positions. Officers should encourage councillors to step up to these positions. TCu suggested agenda and dates of meetings should be shared with all of the Board and members can email Chair and request to join. Would have to consult the Bye-Laws first, but the committees are not decision making bodies in themselves; they exist to make recommendations for the Board to decide on.

AP – Officers to discuss how to advertise committee positions to students at union council

AP – AH to inform Chairs of all committees that they should send agendas and invites to all Board members

**AOB – 3**

AC raised an AOB in relation to a member of student staff (name and details redacted for confidentiality).

The Board decided that they would not intervene in this situation and that the process should be followed as laid out in the bye-laws. AH noted that the Board should learn from this situation in the future.

**AOB – 4**

BF asked whether TCu or CW could provide the Board with an organisational chart and all the positions in the management team.

**AOB – 5**

The Board voted to ratify AA's position on the Board. AH noted that an additional student trustee needs to be recruited.

**TB1182 Time, Date and Place of the next meeting**

16th December 2021