



Trustee Board Summary Minutes
Held on Thursday 29th February 2024
Held in Rooms BA-03-019 (Belfast), H215 (Coleraine) and MD122 (Magee)
and by Microsoft Teams

Present:

Rebecca Allen President (Chair)
 Finola Quigg, Vice President, Education
 Oscar Kelly, Vice President Equality & Belonging
 Dónall Hegarty, Vice President Magee
 Ashley Neill, Lay Trustee
 Andrea Probets Lay Trustee
 Antoinette Bradley, Lay Trustee
 Darren Fowler, Lay Trustee
 Bill Atkinson, Lay Trustee
 Cohen Taylor, Student Trustee

In Attendance:

David Longstaff, Chief Executive Officer
 Colin Campbell, Director of HR & Campus Operations
 Clodagh Kennedy, Director of Finance & Business Support
 Gavin Boyd, Director of Membership & Comms
 Oluwaseyi Kushimo, Vice President Belfast
 Philip Maguire, Vice President Coleraine

Meeting Notes	Action	Update
<p>Agenda Item 1: Welcome by Chair:</p> <p>The Chair welcomed everyone and thanked them for attending, particularly the new External Trustee, BA. She gave her appreciation to the Board for the time taken to read papers in advance. The Board members introduced themselves.</p>		
<p>Agenda Item 2: Apologies/Quorum Count: RAr and EM. DF will join the meeting later.</p>		
<p>Agenda Item 3: Declaration of Interest:</p> <p>The Chair noted that there were no declarations.</p>		
<p>Agenda Item 4: Minutes:</p>		

<p>Minutes of the previous meeting of 30th November 2023 were approved.</p>		
<p>Agenda Item 5: Matters Arising:</p> <p>There were no matters arising.</p>		
<p>Agenda Item 6: Chair's Remarks:</p> <p>The Chair reminded it had been a little while since the last meeting and commenced with her Remarks:</p> <p>Christmas Cheer: This was held across the campuses and was a great success with lots of student engagement.</p> <p>UU Name Change Policy: Conversations have taken place with Registry on the Student Experience aspect. The Board will receive an update at a future meeting.</p> <p>UU Widening Access Plan: We have completed and submitted Part 4 of the annual Plan Response. Some great plans have been raised and the Board will be updated at a later meeting.</p> <p>Media: We have been involved in lots of filming and various AV spots, which have been well received.</p> <p>Postgrad Research Students: We are continuing to connect with the PhD Research community and ensuring they are listened to as part of our membership. We met with Heads of the Doctoral College, then had another PGR connect session and will follow up again with the Doctoral College.</p> <p>UU's Ordinary Degrees Process: This is interesting and ties in with the work that was planned on ethical partnership framework.</p> <p>USI's Conference: We hosted this at Magee and thanks to the DM&C, VPM and VPS&W for organising this event.</p> <p>Refreshers: This was a great success across the campuses. Unfortunately, Belfast Refreshers had to be postponed at short notice due to industrial action by Translink, and lectures being put online, but external vendors were very understanding. The DM&C's report will give more information.</p> <p>Swan Network: Thanks to VPE&B and the Voice Team for the commitment they have given.</p>		<p>UU Name Change Policy Update</p> <p>Widening Access Plan Update.</p>

New Student and Graduate Success Directorate: We've engaged a lot with the new department over a whole range of projects and the VPE and VPE&B have worked hard on this. We have also been co-sharing student panels to get the student voice through Ulster as strongly as possible. There have been Student Voice Forums held across the campuses by the VPE. We have had good engagement from the reps which is appreciated and helps us to close the feedback loop a little bit better on some of the work that we're doing on points already raised.

Student Council Reforms: We passed three new policies at the last meeting, citizens' assemblies, inclusive protection and sexual health education and childcare facilities.

Upcoming Conferences: We have delegates attending NUS, USI and NUS/USI. The policy we submitted to NUS/USI around childcare is one of the top two in the priority ballot and will be discussed at Conference, and we are excited to see how that gets workshopped and implemented.

Sustainable Period Products: We have almost acquired £10,000 funding from Ulster for these which will be available free of charge to students across the campuses.

Diagnosis Centres/Creche Facilities/Sexual Health Clinics: Work is ongoing with the VC to explore the potential of creche facilities on campus together with an on-campus service to diagnose students with ADHD and ASD and an on-campus sexual health clinic in Magee. The VC had pledged some support to all of these pending a couple of papers coming through.

Learning & Teaching Awards/UUSU Awards/Colours Awards: These are all coming up in the next few weeks and Trustees will receive invitations to all of them. We would love to have you there.

Agenda Item 7: Chief Executive Officer's Report:

The CEO reported as follows:

Elections: You will all see from the marketing on socials, the website and being on campus that we are in our election period. We have had a fantastic turnout of candidates and are hoping for a very good voting period between 5th and 7th March with results announced on the evening of the 7th.

Sports Transition Update: Over the last few years, we have been discussing combining sports under one umbrella. At the moment it is split between UUSU and the University and feedback from members is that it is quite confusing. The Board approved this amalgamation 18 months ago, but the University's SLT has only approved it in December. One of the risks we identified was that if we did this all as one,

it could lead to deterioration of experience for those accessing sport. Much of our research from other institutions showed that when this was carried out in a single move, it created some teething problems, so we've agreed a three-stage approach. We are currently in stage one which is where our four sports staff will be considered. The DHR&CO will provide information on stage 2 in his report which will cover Coach's contracts which are fixed term and usually end in May. We will retain the administrative functions of sport for a further year, and this is probably the most critical piece because there is a huge amount of work in ensuring that clubs are funded correctly, and payments are made for travel and insurance etc. and this is the final stage. These transitions will take place over the next 12 – 18 months, then we will completely relinquish them in August 2025 to have the least impact on our membership and maintain our ability to represent Clubs, which was initially an issue for the Board. This was outlined in a paper that we sent to SLT where we pitched for an extra member of staff so, as the paper has been agreed, the extra staff member request appears to have been approved as part of it. This will be followed up with the University Finance Department just to make sure that the additional role is incorporated into our block grant allocation for next year. The VPS&W role will probably become even more critical in the sense that the Officer will have to listen and report on Clubs' feedback and understand their needs because that role will have an enhanced profile within the University. They will sit on most Sport related Senior Management Teams to make sure that student voices are heard and will also chair a governance group which incorporates ourselves and the University. There is plenty of work and opportunity there also which will hopefully lead to a better service for the membership. The Board advised that sport remains to be an issue and it may be prudent to proceed with caution. The CEO agreed as there is still a concern about the timeline slipping slightly and the concern would be that missing some of our deadlines which could have a detrimental effect on students accessing sport.

Cost of Living/Sustainability Projects: Free membership breakfasts are still being distributed and are received very well based on the community fund grant we got from the lottery. We are planning on putting a bid in next year also. The fund has recently been changed so we can bid for double the amount we were able to in 2023, so we may look at a "grab and go" hot lunch offering elements such as Cup-A-Soups or Pot Noodles. Our student fridges project has been successful and ties in with the cost of living and our sustainability development goals around poverty. Fridges are stocked every Wednesday with unused stock from the catering provider in the University and students can go and help themselves. We would like to extend this to more days, but it is challenging as regards Health and Safety Regulations, as someone would have to be on campus the next morning to remove any leftover stock. Currently fridges are cleared out, but this could be a potential risk. The DHR&CO has done a tremendous amount of work in getting these up and running.

Business Development Post: The Business Development role has been on hold, and we are going to fill it in some capacity over the next year. We may access a placement student to help us define the

role remit and what we want to achieve. At the moment it is at tentative level discussions at SMT but we plan to have someone in place by the new financial year to cover the business development portfolio and to give us the opportunity to generate more income and create partnerships.

GAA: Hopefully the Board saw the Sigerson Cup win by the GAA which is a fantastic achievement and certainly the University has been keen to make a celebration of this with a good on-campus event.

Operating Plan: This will be discussed under Agenda Item 11.

Risk Analysis Overview: There has been very little change in the four central risks in the last quarter. The Board received the full risk register at the last Board meeting. In terms of mitigations, the lack of effective means for internal communication, has had a lot of input from the DM&C, and there are further implementations to further mitigate it. It might fall back to the local register which will be a good win as we have focused on getting it right for some time.

NUS/USI Report: This ties into the sustainability aspect and will be circulated to External Trustees. SMT and Student Officers have already read it. The report covers breakfast provision costs and students skipping meals. It is an interesting, but quite a stark read. There have been webinars afterwards, but the real evidence of success comes next in terms of NUS acting on the reports. The VPS&W and others are keeping pressure on to try and do something globally as, if we could combine forces, we are going to be a stronger outfit.

The Board queried how much longer the Pension Scheme will stay as a high risk on the register and the DF&BS informed that there will be a Pension meeting on 11 March and the outcome will be brought to the Board. The CEO explained that we are partly reliant on the University for this currently as it is a part of our block grant where we put a rationale in around the pension. The Finance Senior Leadership postholder has changed three times, and each time we have had to revisit the issue and ensure enough understanding for them to include it. Without the contribution we could become insolvent so there is always that risk to consider.

Agenda Item 8: Director of Finance & Business Support's Report:

The DF&BS informed that there were two parts to her report, firstly the management accounts and secondly on reappointment of auditors.

The Management Accounts are for 6 months up to the end of 31 January for the first half of the financial year.

Income: The actual results are very much on budget. External income has mainly come from Freshers, and the University has given money towards the Hazaar project.

Expenditure:

Admin Salaries & Wages is less than budget because the Business Development role remains unfilled. The second position we budgeted for was filled in December.

Sports Union - Since Covid, sport has got really busy with Magee having a big cost. The £206,000 is ringfenced which means there cannot be an overspend. Further expenditure will be taken out of external sponsorship and £150,000 from Radox which is somewhat depleted already, so sport is going to be under a bit of pressure in relation to funding for the rest of the year, although there have been some discussions with the University about additional funding, perhaps for sport.

Student Voice: It would appear that there has been very little spent, but as elections have now started, there are lots of posters and pictures which will create a big spend for Voice in February, The awards season will commence shortly although I anticipate that Student Voice will be within budget.

The remainder of Expenses are as usual, except for Legal and Consultancy with legal fees costing £32,000. £55,000 was anticipated, although there are further fees to be added. The CEO will expand on this under Reserved Minutes.

The figures show a deficit of £60,000 which is due to a lot of spend in a concentrated period between October and March, with the Block Grant coming in evenly over the year which should balance this out, with the worst case being to break-even this year. If the legal fees are higher, it is projected we will have a surplus of £26,000.

The Balance Sheet: We don't have many fixed assets and have quite a bit of money in cash currently so she will put some money on deposit which has not been done in recent years due to uncertainty, and the interest rates are currently good. On a general basis, our Reserves are where they should be at the end of January and therefore we are financially stable.

The Board questioned a small spend of £12 in Repairs & Maintenance: The DF&BS explained that all of the buildings are new, and Commercial Services are no longer in operation so there would be no major expenditure.

The Board warned of rising insurance prices and the DF&BS replied that when sport moves over to the University, their responsibility will include sports insurance which is probably our highest risk now. Coaches would have employee liability, and this could create a saving.

Appointment of Auditors: The DF&BS explained that we tender for Auditors every two years and GMCG were appointed at the last tender in 2022. She requested that the Board approve a further year's extension to retain GMCG and tender in 2025.

The Board approved.

Agenda Item 9: Director of Membership & Communication's Report:

The DM&C reported that Refreshers created a great deal of activity although we had to postpone Belfast Refreshers at short notice after the decision by the University to move learning online as a result of Translink strike, but the postponement of 5/6 days later worked out well. This created the possibility of holding Refreshers in Week 1 as opposed to Week 0 of semester 2 which meant that it was very active on campus. A lot of students who attended might not have been on campus for the previous week so this may be an ongoing trend. A difficulty has arisen between us and the University as to who has what role when providing those more social opportunities for students at the start of the semester. Originally the University planned to have their kind of welcome back activities the week before Refreshers, but then decided to hold them the same week, so there is an ongoing conversation we have to have with the University as to how to clearly differentiate the roles that we have for engaging with students at the start of the semester.

Branded clothing is now live for all staff and gives students the opportunity to stop us and ask questions which is very positive.

He gave credit to the VPS&W and VPE for the work that they carried out on engagement with Postgrad Researchers over the past couple of years. They have created a space for them to articulate what it is they see the role of the Union as being their representative, and great work from the SVM and the Voice Team for taking the concerns and critiques and bringing them directly to the Doctoral College and using that relationship to demonstrate the value of having a formalised representative structure.

We are in the middle of our election period now and have 26 candidates running for Officer posts and believe this to be the largest number since 2018. Officers have done excellent work over the past number of years, being really visible and vocal and articulating on the views of our members which gives members something to aspire to and a model for what they can achieve in their roles. The

Student Voice Team has done a great job in working with the Marketing Team to develop resources and really promote the leadership elections early in the year and raise awareness and interest among members to consider whether or not they would like to put themselves up for election. The Vice President Sport & Wellbeing role is the only uncontested one for election this year. This is due to a late withdrawal. Two of our current Officers are seeking re-election and an ex-Vice President Coleraine is running for President. An online hustings event was held yesterday afternoon where candidates were able to put forward their views as to what they would do in their roles if they were to be elected which provides a great opportunity for the candidates to think clearly about what it is that they would do in the role, and how best they would serve the members. We have visible boards and tables where candidates can put up their manifestos and posters and take some time to engage with members and encourage them to vote. We haven't identified any issues with the various campaigns that need to be addressed at this stage. Trustees might remember we had a couple of concerns around the conduct of some campaigns last year. We sought to head those issues off early this year through the candidates' information sessions and ensure that candidates and their teams are aware of what is really not what we expect from a good and well-run campaign. The SVM, G&PC and I have worked across the campuses during this campaign period to observe and engage with the candidates and just make sure that everyone is engaging in the process and the spirit that this is best for the members and best for the democratic procedures with the Union. The results will be next Thursday evening 7th March in the Bar in the Belfast campus, and everyone is welcome to attend and see who the new leadership team for next year will be. We have additional awards for the campaigns and the candidates as well as our way of recognising the roles that candidates and their campaign teams bring to the spirit of the election.

Another aspect of the organisation is the Advice Bureau. There has been a lot of appeals coming in. There have also been running issues with some courses, particularly Postgrad Management courses that have a lot of international students who are raising concerns about their assessment processes and some about fees which have been raised through Student Voice through the Rep structure and Advice Bureau.

There have been some really positive engagements with students held by the VPM and VPE and representation made to the University through Appeals for Academic Equality and addressing these issues in a strategic way so students are not just repeating semester after semester, but a more long-term view of the needs of international students are addressed and if they are getting the right level of support from the University that they chose to attend.

There have been a number of Sport successes recently including Sigerson Cup.

Colours Sports Award is Wednesday 1st May at the Titanic Belfast with more information to follow when finalised.

My report shows analytic data from social media as to what kind of messages and themes have engaged members and increased our reach. Animal themes are always popular with the members and the breadth of activity on campus, predictably events that are led by Officers. We have had a busy semester with lots more activity to be done. All the teams have done well with great work obviously supported and led by the Officers.

The Board queried the difference in interaction between Facebook and Instagram, with Instagram seeming to have the most clicks. There is more content interaction, but our numbers are quite low. The DM&C replied that it is a smaller pool. A lot of people who follow us on Facebook are not actually current members. They may be University staff or former members, so it has a slightly different audience. Our content on Instagram tends to be more directed towards videos and stories which lead us through clicks and provides greater interaction. We have less of that content on Facebook, so it tends not to engage the same audiences in the same way.

Agenda Item 10: Director of Human Resources & Campus Operation's Report:

The DHR&CO referred to Hazaar's report which they provide at the end of each semester to give details on their success rate. There has been some savings as this was a joint venture between UUSU and Campus Life. It appears to be taking a little time to build and Hazaar has had staffing issues although they have recruited a few more student staff. We have pop-ups markets planned for after Easter and hope that will start to increase participation, both through the pop-up markets and getting more students to use the app.

During Semester 1 we have had 220 Society events and 27 UUSU events.

We are providing breakfasts, unsold sandwiches and Hazaar which all come under our Green Impact Award data as part of NUS and University Life where we have to complete a workbook and submission, which will be audited as evidence.

The VPS&W, SAM and the DM&C have been working on an end of year event at Magee by way of a music festival. The VC is proposing to contribute £20,000 through Campus Life. Discussions are ongoing.

Agenda Item 11: Operating Plan

The CEO shared the Plan on his screen and reported that the last operating plan came at the start of Covid, so it was more of a reactionary plan, and there were limited opportunities for engagement across the organisation. This plan has been developed in conjunction with all the managers and President representing the Student Officers' views, so everyone has had a stake in delivery so it is now being delivered for sense checking by the Board and then we will circulate it to managers for any comments. The document will exist to map this, and the Board will have access to it. The CEO will report on highlights, and it is a live document for anyone to access. He explained as follows:

The pieces in the orange text are a reminder of the 12 promises which outputs have to fall underneath, gauged from membership feedback, which fall under 3 columns Represent, Support and Connect, so everything we do ties back into them,

We carried this out with our managers also and added illustrative budget amounts for the Board to have an idea of where we might spend more money. We will remove them, as we want managers to tie into their own departmental annual plan so they will decide how they are going to meet that measure and the cost. We have some markers in mind, so there is no overspend.

Some top line outputs include working on the representative area and concentrate on the value of member-driven data which we can present to the University and external organisations and provide relevant figures by way of a quarterly survey. We hope this will then lead to an understanding of the views of the members and provide data to develop some press work and build on the President and her work with the VC, thus providing regular opportunities to really push the University SLT to deliver on their promises and also take students' views on board.

Represent: We need more digitalisation. The DM&C flagged the pressure on our Advice Bureau earlier as that service has become more integral to the student community over the last 5 years since it was launched. We need an initial triage to release some of the pressure and use available tools more to ascertain where we can have more of an impact with students. We can pull in lots of data, but we don't knit it together to look at whether various themes transcend in different areas, or to develop an understanding of where our members feel they belong, i.e. UUSU, University, Course, or Friendship Group and what campaigns can we run around our own identity to ensure that membership feels it is part of UUSU.

Support: The volume of feedback from members that they wanted access to skills and experiences didn't necessarily tally with some of the services we ran in the past around volunteering and access to

<p>opportunities to gain new skills. We need to look at our volunteering service and run a very targeted pilot of a volunteer scheme as part of the Wellbeing Garden initiative and see if volunteering and access to experiencing skills is what students want, and how much resources we need for it. We have a mental health plan and will ascertain what is feasible to deliver over the next 12 months. We also want to build on Officers' Manifestos as part of our integrated plan on Campaigns as they all differ in what they wish to achieve. We have considered the Business Development role as generating income so we would have the infrastructure in place that we need. The Business Development person would ideally provide a 3-5 year plan as to where the opportunities lie and convince us that they are achievable for an organisation of our size to try to meet our membership's requirements. We would like to have a partnership in place in each campus with an external provider who can enhance what we offer on campus and provide social engagement so we can have a planned entertainments programme prepared for 2025/26. We need a PR plan to complement our digital work and have been using QR codes to drive people to our website and see what makes them want to engage so we have a specific target.</p> <p>Connect. We currently use the University digital mailing system which is ceasing to work as more emails are sent out by the University, so we could benefit from a standalone system. There is a lot of legal considerations around data and GDPR so this would require a thorough assessment on options to have our own system in place for 2025/26. Our biggest assets include the Officers and staff members to be visible on campus. Monthly pop-ups in various places throughout the campus over the year would encourage greater engagement and we are keen to have a more structured process for members to meet with Officers.</p> <p>An Alumni Network could offer a potential revenue stream, but it could be dependent on employing a Business Development person in place to oversee and manage the network, but we would like a proposal in place this year which maps out how that will grow over the next three years.</p> <p>The final page gives information on all the targets, and the colour code will change as they progress.</p>		
<p>Agenda Item 12: Reserved Item.</p> <p>Please see Reserved Minutes</p>		
<p>Agenda Item 13: Any Other Business:</p> <p>There was no other business.</p>		

Agenda Item 14: Date of Next Meeting:

30th May 2024

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