

Approved Minutes

Present

Graham Raikes MBE (Chair)	Independent Governor	GR
Emma van der Lugt (Deputy Chair)	Independent Governor	EvdL
Prof Claire Taylor	Vice-Chancellor	CT
Dr Greg Borne	Academic Staff Governor (Senate Elected)	GB
Sarah Boyd	Student Governor (Marjon Student Union President)	SB
Louise Bridgett	Independent Governor	LB
Kate Doodson	Independent Governor	KD
Matt Evans	Independent Governor	ME
Vicky Hatton	Independent Governor	VH
Alex Hawtin	Independent Governor	AH
Ruth Mounstephen	Independent Governor	RM
Duncan Swift	Independent Governor	DS
Esther Tonna-Morgan	Professional Services Staff Governor	ETM
Jackie Westerman	Independent Governor	JW

In attendance

Guy Bolt	Co-opted Board Member	GBo
Rt Rev'd Dr Tim Dakin	Co-opted Board Member	TD
Katherine George	Co-opted Board Member	KG
Rt Rev'd James Grier	Co-opted Board Member	JG
Prof Mark Llewellyn	Co-opted Board Member	ML
Prof John Scott CBE	Co-opted Board Member	JS
Jennie Walker	Co-opted Board Member	JW
Rev'd Michelle Parkman	University Chaplain	MP
Jessamie Thomas	Governance Officer (note taker)	JT

In attendance (SMT members)

Simon Arthurs (items 4 -7)	Chief Operating Officer & Finance Director	SA
Katy Willis (items 6-9)	Pro Vice-Chancellor (Student Success)	KW
Stephen Plant	University Secretary & Registrar	SP

1. Welcome, Apologies & Declarations of Conflicts of Interests

- 1.1 The Chair, Graham Raikes MBE, welcomed colleagues.
- 1.2 At GR's invitation, University Chaplain, Rev'd Michelle Parkman, opened the meeting with a prayer.
- 1.3 Apologies were received from Prof Patricia Hind and Fiona Nicholls.
- 1.4 Written declarations of interest were contained in Part C, within the Register of Interests. GR invited Board of Governors (BoG) members to share any updates; no new declarations were made.

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- 1.5 A warm welcome was extended to Prof Claire Taylor (Vice-Chancellor), whose Inauguration Ceremony had been held the previous day. Louise Bridgett (Directly Appointed Independent Governor), Prof Mark Llewellyn (Co-optee), Duncan Swift (Directly Appointed Independent Governor) and Jennie Walker (Co-optee), were also welcomed to their first BoG meeting. At GR's invitation they introduced themselves; their skills and experience were noted and all were thanked for their support.
- 1.6 Sincere thanks were extended to Dr Greg Borne, this being the final meeting of his tenure.
- 1.7 GR asked if colleagues wished to 'unstar' any items in Part B. None were identified. Items 11 to 20 were **APPROVED**. Items 21 to 30 were noted, together with supporting papers contained in Part C. GR wished to thank the contributors of these papers, noting the wide range of matters covered.

- 2. Report from Vice-Chancellor**
- 2.1 The report was received. GR invited CT to present a summary of her inaugural report, following her appointment as Vice-Chancellor with effect from May 2023.
- 2.2 CT's report contained commentary on key areas, including an overview of developments in UK Higher Education and Marjon's news, challenges and opportunities. CT invited questions from BoG.
- 2.3 BoG commended CT on her diligence in familiarising herself with the city and region, networking with leaders in education, business and politics, to bring Marjon in to the spotlight in a wide range of discussions. CT was pleased to note that business leaders as well as educationalists were engaging with the transformative potential of education.
- 2.4 CT provided information on changes which had been made to the Senior Management Team membership, responsibilities and reporting structure.
- 2.5 CT highlighted the work of Prof Neil Morris, external digital advisor, in assessing the University's digital transformation priorities. CT thanked Kate Doodson, Governor, for her support in this area. A report would come to BoG in the autumn.
- 2.6 The University's 'Focus Now Project' had concluded; CT reminded BoG of the rationale for this and commended Prof Michelle Jones, Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Provost, on leading this. CT explained next steps, including a review of business plans and budgetary responsibilities.
- 2.7 CT commented on financial pressures experienced by students sector-wide, exacerbated by cost of living challenges. BoG discussed ways in which students were being supported by University initiatives. GR updated colleagues on Marjon Stores pricing, following discussions at the previous BoG meeting; he concluded that prices tended to be 10-15% lower than local shops, noting also the University subsidy which served to keep prices down. GR noted that Chartwells had recruited a Student Engagement Officer. GR would discuss further with Chartwells its pricing narrative.
- 2.8 Ofsted had recently inspected Marjon's teacher education provision; an update would be brought to BoG in due course. Opportunities to develop teacher education regionally were discussed.

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- 2.9 The positioning of sport, in terms of complementing wider community engagement, was flagged and would be followed up by CT with Matt Evans, Governor.
- 2.10 CT responded to questions around anticipated student recruitment levels, both for Marjon and sector-wide, and implications in terms of finance and curriculum planning. CT agreed that the area of apprenticeships was evolving quickly and would be particularly relevant to Marjon's healthcare programmes. It was suggested that clarifying possible routes into nursing for the public's understanding would be an interesting area to explore. CT confirmed she would be holding meetings with local NHS leaders.
- 2.11 With regard to the mission of the University to encourage educational development and opportunity in the south west, CT explained to BoG the national policy-making context and its inherent challenges and opportunities. It was noted that a number of flourishing areas of Marjon's provision were rooted in advancing social inclusion and social mobility; education had been a strength in Marjon's REF submission and CT agreed it would be timely to consider how to strengthen Marjon's position further and reduce social inequality.
- 2.12 In response to a query, CT confirmed that additional marketing activities, informed by digital transformation, would be targeted at specific programmes to support growth.
- 2.13 In response to a query, CT provided details of issues around which Universities UK (UUK) communicated with the Office for Students (OfS), for example, regulatory burden and transparency. CT suggested that BoG may find it of interest to listen to a WonkHE podcast on changes in the sector over the last decade. A recording of CT's speech, from the previous day's Inauguration Ceremony, would also be shared. **ACTION: JT**
- 2.14 CT was thanked for the report and update and commended on her work as Vice-Chancellor. BoG looked forward to receiving her Strategy Update in the autumn.

3. Report from Marjon Student Union (MSU) President

- 3.1 The report from Student Governor and MSU President, Sarah Boyd, was received. GR invited SB to present an overview.
- 3.2 SB thanked a number of individuals for their support, including her predecessor Will Mintram and his deputy Rebekah Fletcher, having commenced in post on 1 July 2023. SB looked forward to working with Liam Williams, MSU Deputy President. SB and LW outlined their priorities for the year ahead. This included promoting an inclusive Freshers' Week, with activities which, at the Vice-Chancellor's request, would be thoughtfully marketed. SB invited questions from BoG.
- 3.3 BoG reflected on how to optimise the MSU experience for students whose personal profiles varied greatly. CT noted that the MSU Trustees would be reviewing their strategy, which was timely, given the evolving profile of the student population. BoG noted SB's manifesto aim this year to focus on the health and wellbeing of students, in collaboration with the University.
- 3.4 MSU's focus on embedding sustainability was commended, in the context of the University's net zero commitment. It was suggested that MSU may wish to liaise with the Co-Op (the Marjon Stores brand) given their support of charitable causes.

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- 3.5 One amendment to the MSU Constitution was approved, as per the report in Part B. The MSU Election Report and Minutes of the Annual General Meeting were received for information.
- 3.6 SB was thanked for the report; SB and LW were thanked for their updates.

A 10 minute break was taken at this point.

Chief Operating Officer & Finance Director, Simon Arthurs, and Project Manager (Estates and Sustainability) Peter Kay joined the meeting.

Ruth Mounstephen left the meeting.

4. Estates Update

- 4.1 The report was received (see Part B). This had been discussed by Estates Project Group and Finance & Resources (F&R) Committee. GR invited SA and PK to provide an overview.
- 4.2 PK summarised current space utilisation and principles for space planning. He reminded BoG of the imminent return to Marjon's use of the Peninsula Allied Health Centre (PAHC) which would be refurbished and incorporate an academic hub. CT noted that unlocking the potential of the Studio School was also significant; this would be considered as part of the Capital Programme proposals later in the meeting. PK explained the intent to accommodate programmes in particular zones as part of a ten year plan, to embed a sense of belonging and synergy.
- 4.3 GR invited PK to share an update on New Student Residential Accommodation options, noting that a workshop had been held at the end of April with BoG members and external advisors to discuss these. PK guided BoG members through a presentation. The Campus Utilisation Plan was shown via a satellite image of the campus and an index of spaces detailing their use. PK discussed the New Student Residential Accommodation Site Options Long List Plan, sharing a RAG-rated map of options. The feasibility of converting certain buildings from academic use to residential use was discussed.
- 4.4 In response to a question around whether the priority for utilisation would be residential or non-residential use, CT confirmed that this was being analysed as part of the curriculum review initiatives and would, in part, depend upon the growth of healthcare programmes and the needs and profile of those students. Feedback from students indicated the importance of accommodation on campus, and it featured regularly in discussions with prospective students. However, the quality of accommodation would need to be improved, given its age and condition.
- 4.5 GR requested that PK's presentation be shared with BoG. **ACTION: JT** GR thanked CT, SA and PK for their updates and commended them on the work being done to explore appropriate options. An update would be brought to BoG in the autumn.
PK left the meeting.
Pro Vice-Chancellor (Student Success), Katy Willis, joined the meeting.

5. Management Accounts Year-End Update

- 5.1 The report was received. GR invited SA to present an overview.

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- 5.2 BoG was asked to note the May 2023 (period 10) monitoring, in relation to financial resilience, financial sustainability and outcomes for 2022/23. The current financial performance showed the budget to be on track, with some variations within this from across the year. The intention remained to deliver the budgeted position by 31 July 2023; how best to secure this had been carefully considered by BoG's F&R Committee.
- 5.3 With reference to the Revenue Budget 2022/23, SA drew BoG's attention to the commentary contained within his report, plus Appendix A, student numbers comparison analysis and Appendix B, Summary Budget 2022/23. SA answered questions, to BoG's satisfaction.
- 5.4 SA reminded BoG of the Capital envelope as shown at Figure 6. The Capital Programme for 2022/23 represented a combination of the annual financial envelope plus the projects in-flight brought forward from 2021/22. These included the Plymouth Studio School (purchase price and fees) which would be funded by a bank loan.
- 5.5 Following F&R Committee's recommendation, BoG **APPROVED** a revised allocation of the capital plan, to include a capital revenue fund swap of £0.400m to support the one-off costs of restructuring the University. A small amount of headroom would be carried forward.
- 5.6 SA reminded BoG of the analysis presented in the Treasury Management Balanced Scorecard (Appendix C), and the borrowing and investment position of the University. SA provided further detail and responded to questions to BoG's satisfaction.
- 5.7 SA reiterated the importance of cash resilience and highlighted the modelling of this at Figure 8. SA confirmed that the bank covenants were regularly tested and within target. BoG acknowledged that this remained a risk; CT and SA provided details of how this was being carefully managed.
- 5.8 Further key financial risks were contained within Appendix D and noted by BoG.
- 5.9 BoG was content with the position and commended SA for his work. SA was thanked for the report and update.
- 6. Interim Budget Proposals (Capital and Revenue) 2023-24**
- 6.1 The report was received. GR invited CT to present the context for the proposals. CT's summary referenced a number of key areas, notably student recruitment targets and the development of healthcare education programmes. A Student Recruitment Update was included in Part B.
- 6.2 CT provided detailed rationale for the proposed budget, which would allow for the development of a people-centred, digitally-enabled connected community. CT agreed it would be important to convey to staff the opportunities for job enrichment which digital transformation would generate. CT confirmed that a centralised staff development budget would be reintroduced and the People Strategy would continue to be a guiding framework to support staff in a wide range of areas. The University would continue to prioritise student outcomes as well as maintain financial robustness.
- 6.3 GR thanked CT for the introduction and invited SA to present an overview of the budget report.

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- 6.4 SA confirmed the budget approach of delivering within available resources and transforming to grow. Specifically, it would be important to invest in digital transformation ahead of seeing the benefit of this investment. BoG discussed the proposal to set an underlying break-even budget with a ringfenced digital transformation fund, within the total affordable resources.
- 6.5 Following careful scrutiny of the position, including Revenue (Appendix A) and Savings, Efficiency Plans and Opportunities (Appendices Bi and Bii) and assumptions contained within the report, and receiving assurances regarding bank covenants and OfS liquidity compliance, BoG **APPROVED** the Interim Revenue breakeven budget for 2023/24 with its £0.700m digital investment fund. It was noted that there was a working balance in the budget to be met; SA explained how this would be achieved, ahead of the November BoG meeting at which the budget would be confirmed.
- 6.6 Noting the cashflow fluctuations through the year, reflecting receipt of student funding in three tranches, yet balancing this with the importance of supporting staff through the cost of living challenges, BoG **AGREED** to deliver a pay award but retain the option to defer this, if necessary, within parameters recognised by the Universities and Colleges Employers Association (UCEA), the unions and subject to the compliant cashflow monitoring.
- 6.7 BoG **APPROVED** the Capital Plan financial envelope for 2023/24 of £2m, noting that a detailed plan was being prioritised as part of the ten-year plan. The refurbishment of the Studio School was acknowledged as a priority, to bring it into use for September 2024. BoG received assurances that the OfS teaching capital funding, which would refurbish and transform the PAHC building, was being appropriately allocated and carefully managed. SA reminded colleagues that this grant passed through the revenue budget as turnover, but would be shown separately to avoid distorting the underlying revenue budget.
- 6.8 BoG **APPROVED** in full the MSU funding request for 2023/24 of £135,261, signalling its support of MSU in this challenging financial climate. Going forward, MSU would be asked to review its costs, as expected from any other Marjon manager, in the context of working towards a three-year business plan. SA confirmed that the University would support MSU in developing this.
- 6.9 BoG noted key risks and a summary of mitigation, as contained in Appendix C.
- 6.10 BoG considered and **APPROVED** fee proposals for 2024/25, as contained in Appendix D.
- 6.11 CT and SA were thanked for the report and update.
Rt Rev'd James Grier left the meeting.
A 10 minute break was taken at this point.

7. Health & Safety Statement of Intent

- 7.1 The report was received. GR invited SA to present an overview.
- 7.2 Following consideration of the Statement, BoG was satisfied with the position. The Health & Safety Statement of Intent was **APPROVED**.
- 7.3 BoG noted that further reports regarding Health & Safety were contained in Part B: the H&S Annual Report and H&S Policy. SA was thanked for the reports and update.
SA left the meeting.

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8. Update from Committees

- 8.1 **Report from Committee Chairs** – GR invited Committee Chairs to provide a verbal update; minutes of meetings were contained in Part C for information.
- 8.2 **i) Board Membership and Succession Planning - Report from Governance & Nominations Committee** – the report was received.
- 8.3 Informed by the BoG skills audit, the following proposals were agreed:
- 8.4 The appointment of Reena Bajaj as Co-opted Member of the Board, to join F&R Committee, from 01.10.2023 was **APPROVED**.
- 8.5 The appointment of James Beckly as Co-opted Member of the Board, to join DPIG, from 01.10.2023 was **APPROVED**.
- 8.6 The renaming of the task group ‘Estates Project Group’ to ‘Digital & Physical Infrastructure Group’, to be chaired by Kate Doodson, was **APPROVED**.
- 8.7 The appointment of Prof Patricia Hind, Directly Appointed Governor, to the role of Joint Deputy Chair of BoG, and the extension of her second term of office to 01.12.2024, were **APPROVED**.
- 8.8 The appointment of Rt Rev’d James Grier (currently a BoG Co-optee) to the role of Church-Nominated Governor, was **APPROVED**.
- 8.9 GR noted that further committee membership proposals would be brought to BoG in due course.
- 8.10 University Secretary, Stephen Plant and Governance Officer, Jessamie Thomas, were thanked for the report.
- 8.11 **ii) Board Effectiveness Report and Statement** – the report was received.
- 8.12 GR noted that the report was a comprehensive summary of the Board Effectiveness Review Process, encompassing Governor effectiveness, Board effectiveness, Committee effectiveness and the Chair’s effectiveness. A number of strands had fed into this process; BoG members and staff were thanked for their contributions and feedback.
- 8.13 GR invited BoG to consider his Chair’s Annual Report (Appendix A). The report reflected his conversations with all BoG members. The report highlighted key successes of the University, with thanks expressed to former Vice-Chancellor, Prof Rob Warner and MJ for acting as Interim Vice-Chancellor. The appointment of Prof Claire Taylor as Vice-Chancellor heralded a new era for the University and had been made following a robust selection process.
- 8.14 GR picked out some key highlights for BoG consideration going forward, notably the importance of building on the Research Excellence Framework submission. The November BoG Strategy Day would explore priority areas.
- 8.15 Joint Deputy Chair of BoG, Emma van der Lugt, confirmed that Governance & Nominations Committee had received a report on the Chair’s effectiveness, including feedback from BoG members and staff, and the Committee had confirmed its robust endorsement of his performance as Chair. GR was thanked for his commitment, particularly during the Vice-Chancellor appointment process.

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- 8.16 BoG confirmed that the Board Effectiveness Review Process (contained in Part C) was comprehensive and appropriate for the year ahead. CT suggested that it could be timely to explore a peer review of Board effectiveness with a similar-sized University. **ACTION: SP**
- 8.17 The Board Effectiveness Statement 2023-24 (Appendix B) was **AGREED** and would be published on the University's website.
- 8.18 Governance Officer, Jessamie Thomas, was thanked for the report.

9. Student Experience Update

- 9.1 GR invited Professional Services Staff Governor, Esther Tonna-Morgan, to describe the opportunities for students to work at the University as part of the Welcome Team, which she managed.
- 9.2 ET-M introduced three student colleagues, Adrian Shaw, Frankie Sarkar and Kit Sattler. Each shared their reflections on their rationale for choosing a university education, why they chose Marjon and their experience of being a staff member on the Welcome Team whilst also studying.
- 9.3 A Q&A session followed, with BoG members keen to find out more about the presenters' experiences and areas where the BoG could focus its attention to improve the student experience. Addressing student isolation in the early months of study, encouraging students to embrace outdoor spaces and providing student accommodation on campus were suggested as areas to develop. In terms of what made Marjon special, its friendly atmosphere, approachability of lecturers, provision of specialist courses, reputational advantage in key areas and its scale and navigability were all highlighted.
- 9.4 With regard to the benefits of combining studies with employment at the University, a number of advantages as well as the financial benefit were highlighted, including the development of professional skills, working as part of a well-managed and supportive team and forging cross-departmental friendships.
- 9.5 Adrian Shaw, Frankie Sarkar and Kit Sattler were thanked for their presentations and for sharing their insights with BoG. ET-M was thanked for her work with the Welcome Team and her support of student colleagues both in terms of preparing for this presentation and in the workplace.

10. Reserved Business – See RB minutes.

Close

GR invited colleagues to consider whether any of the meeting's discussions impacted on the current Risk Register; no new risks were identified.

In closing the meeting, GR thanked BoG for their support and challenge.

CT was commended on her work as Vice-Chancellor during these early months of her tenure and thanked for her leadership of the University.

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Part B

The following reports were received and approved:

11. Minutes of Previous BoG Meeting (M2 24 March 2023) were received as an accurate record and **APPROVED** with no amendments.
12. MSU Constitution was **APPROVED**.
13. Financial Regulations were **APPROVED**.
14. Counter Fraud & Anti-Corruption Policy was **APPROVED**.
15. Slavery and Human Trafficking Annual Statement was **APPROVED**.
16. Cyber Security Policy was **APPROVED**.
17. Prevent Policy was **APPROVED**.
18. Risk Management Policy was **APPROVED**. The Risk Register was noted.
19. Health and Safety: Annual Report was noted. The Health & Safety Policy was **APPROVED**.
20. **Governors' Handbook** was **APPROVED**.

The following reports were received for information:

21. Matters Arising from Previous Meeting
22. Student Recruitment Update
23. Update on Student Recruitment and Marketing Strategy
24. Neurodiversity Update
25. MSU Reports: Election Report; Minutes of Annual General Meeting
26. HESA Staff Return
27. Gender Pay Gap Report
28. Estates Update
29. Briefing Note: House of Lords' Inquiry into OfS
30. Briefing Note: Freedom of Speech

Part C

The following reports were received as supplementary information:

- C8** Board Membership – Confidential Interview Reports
- C8** Board Effectiveness: Online Survey Responses
- C8** Board Effectiveness Review Process
- C8** Committee Terms of Reference 2023-24
- C8** Minutes of Committees/Sub-Committees:
 - a) Audit Committee M2 17.03.2023; (b) Finance & Resources Committee M3 10.03.2023; Interim 22.05.2023; (c) Estates Project Group Workshop 21.04.2023 (d) Senate 01.03.2023; 10.05.2023
- C12** Marjon Student Union Constitution
- C** Board Strategy Session Programme and Presenter Feedback 24.03.2023
- C** Schedule of Meeting Dates
- C** Register of Interests