



The
University
Of
Sheffield.

Office UEB/2020/0806/01
Of The
President &
Vice-Chancellor.
CONFIRMED

Minutes University Executive Board

Date:	25 May 2021
Present:	Professor K Lamberts (KL) (in the Chair) Professor J Derrick (JD), Professor S Fitzmaurice (SF), Professor S Hartley (SH), Professor M Hounslow (MJH), Ms J Jones (JJ), Professor C Newman (CN), Professor D Petley (DNP), Mr R Sykes (RS), Professor G Valentine (GV), Professor M Vincent (MV), Professor C Watkins (CW)
In attendance:	Dr T Strike (TS), Ms T Wray (TW), Mr I Wright (IW), Mr N Button (NB) (Items 1)
Apologies:	Ms H Fraser-Krauss (HFK)
Secretary:	Ms K Sullivan (KS)

Action by

1. Archaeology Review Report

(Nick Button in attendance for this item)

1.1 UEB considered a report on a recent review of the Department of Archaeology. The review had followed a letter to the President & Vice-Chancellor from staff in the Department expressing concerns about its sustainability. The Review Group, which included independent external members from within the wider discipline and engaged with staff and student representatives, confirmed that the Department was facing significant academic challenges driven by a difficult national disciplinary position, increased competition, and years of declining performance. The report highlighted significant undergraduate recruitment challenges, limited opportunities for PGT growth, a significant decline in research performance and lack of sufficient leadership, compounded by the loss of a number of experienced teaching and research staff over recent years, to adequately address the challenges faced. Reflecting on the findings, the Review Group concluded that the Department was too small to be sustainable as an academic unit. However, the Group did recognise that the Department has key strengths in research, innovation and education in osteoarchaeology and cultural heritage. The Review Group identified three potential options to address the challenges facing the Department:

1. To support the Department's own proposal for investment, which included the recruitment of four new members of early career staff.
2. Department closure, in full with teach-out to honour the University's commitment to existing students.
3. To retain key areas of strength in archaeological research and teaching by aligning them with other parts of the University.

1.2 UEB considered the matter, carefully noting all of the key findings of the review. UEB also considered the regulatory implications of each option and next steps in terms of governance; recognising that a final decision would be a matter for the University Council, which would receive a recommendation from UEB and would need to consult with the University's Senate.

1.3 During discussion, UEB raised and noted the following points:

- UEB recognised the enormous value of arts and humanities, both within the Faculty and across the whole University. It also recognised the Department's historic reputation and its areas of strength. However, the fact that the Department was facing multiple challenges, including a difficult external environment and a significant reduction in undergraduate student numbers, could not be ignored and action needed to be taken to address these challenges.
- UEB agreed that the status quo could not be maintained, given the small-scale but very diverse nature of the activity. However, the University remained committed to retaining and supporting areas of strength in archaeology research and teaching and to investing in areas of excellence, in line with the University vision. It would be important to develop a clear strategy to regain market share and increase strength in these areas, and any other areas of strength identified, alongside a plan for targeted investment to support this.
- UEB recognised that there was more work to do to in terms of identifying all the cognate departments and activities that most closely aligned with areas of strength. It would be important to ensure UEB led this work, and work to identify any other areas of strength where there may be scope for innovative collaborations, and to identify ways in which the University could support the transition and invest in the further development of these areas of excellence, including extending inter-disciplinary collaborations.
- The University must ensure that students continue to receive high-quality teaching, research supervision and support for the duration of their studies. The University was committed to following the processes outlined in its student protection plan.
- UEB recognised the significant interest that already existed about the outcomes of the Departmental review, both within the University and from the wider community of stakeholders. It would be important to communicate UEB's considerations to staff and students within the Department as soon as possible and the University would fully engage with them throughout the process.
- When developing wider communications, the University should be mindful of regional partners and the interest that its decisions would generate in the wider community, including from some professional bodies, and potential wider reputational risks. It would be important to be clear about the scale of the challenges faced by the department and how it arrived at this point, particularly in light of the Department's strong historical reputation.
- UEB considered next steps in terms of internal Governance and the University's regulatory obligations. UEB's recommendation should

be presented to the Council, which would consult with the Senate; recognising that a final decision would be a matter for the Council. It was noted that the Senate was due to meet on 23 June. Its feedback would be provided to Council for its meeting on 12 July. It was clarified that the University must consult with students ahead of a final decision. It must also trigger its student protection plan (SPP) and inform the OfS that it is contemplating that some programmes would be taught-out and would not continue.

- 1.4** Reflecting on the findings of the review, UEB agreed to recommend to Council an enhanced version of Option 3; to retain key areas of strength in archaeological research and teaching, including cultural heritage and osteoarchaeology, by aligning them with other parts of the University, with a strong commitment to identifying any other areas of strength where there may be scope for innovative collaborations, to supporting the transition and to targeting investment in the further development of these areas of excellence, including extending inter-disciplinary collaborations. Aligning and co-locating areas of strength with other areas of academic excellence was in line with the approach at many other universities and would help to sustain and develop education and research activity. It was noted that this would mean discontinuing some programmes. KL/TS
- 1.5 Actions**
- (a) Develop internal and external communications plans; including immediate communications to staff and students of the Department of Archaeology. TW
 - (b) Submit a Reportable Event to the OfS stating that the University is contemplating the closure of a department or discipline and the discontinuation of some programmes. TS
 - (c) Communicate with students; highlighting the University commitment to supporting their ongoing studies to completion as set out under the terms of our Student Protection Plan. GV
 - (d) Establish a UEB-led implementation Group, to be chaired by the Provost & Deputy Vice-Chancellor, to develop proposals; ToRs to be developed and brought to the next meeting. GV/TS
 - (e) To report UEB's proposal to the Council for consideration. GV/TS

2. Coronavirus Update

2.1 Update from the Major Incident Team

UEB discussed future arrangements, and ongoing costs, for additional provisions/services put in place in the context of Covid-19; these included quarantine arrangements for students, track and trace, Covid Marshalls, additional cleaning and enhanced on-site security (during periods of low foot fall on campus). UEB supported the continuation of these services in principle, where there was a continued need; detailed costs would be provided at the next meeting for consideration.

3. Round Table

- (a) Annual Leave: UEB discussed whether to return to the previous limit of 5 days' annual leave that could be carried over, to start from October 2021 (previously increased to 10 days 2019/20 to 2020/21)

due to pressures of Covid-19). Reflecting on the level of annual leave across the organisation that remained untaken/as yet not booked (12.5 days average), UEB agreed to revert to 5 days (pro-rata) from October 2020, with exceptional circumstances to be taken in to consideration on a case by case basis.

- (b) Other Business: The VC assured UEB that priority issues previously on the agenda (overtaken by the need to focus on the Archaeology matter) were being given appropriate attention and consideration.

Minutes confirmed at UEB meeting held on 8 June 2021

Signature