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| Cardiff Metropolitan University |
| Strategic Planning and Performance Committee Annual Report |
| Academic Year 2023/2024 |

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| Approved by: Taylor, JohnNovember 2024 |





Strategic Planning and
Performance Committee
Annual Report

# About the Committee

The Strategic Planning and Performance Committee (the **Committee**) is a delegated body of the Board of Governors (the **Board**) at Cardiff Metropolitan University (the **University**).

The Committee advises the Board on strategic planning, monitoring and evaluation of strategic priorities, progress towards growth, diversification and improvement, and horizon scanning.

In 2023/2024, the Committee was supported Greg Lane (Head of Governance and Clerk to the Board of Governors) and Julie Morgan (Senior Governance Officer).

Remit

The Committee is responsible for advising the University on matters regarding strategic planning and academic performance. It’s Terms of Reference can be found at [Appendix 1](#_Appendix_1). In summary, its work included:

* Advising the Executive on matters of strategy, including planning, and evaluating performance against the strategic priorities through measures of success and key performance indicators.
* Development of, and assessment of progress against, the Fee and Access Plan.
* Reviewing the University’s performance in: the Research Excellence Framework, Academic Quality Assurance, and key league tables and surveys.
* Assessment of the impact of external changes through horizon scanning.

Membership

Membership of the Committee for the Academic Year 2023/24 was as follows:

* John Taylor (Chair and Independent Governor)
* Professor Cara Aitchison (President and Vice Chancellor) (until February 2024)
* Professor Rachael Langford (President and Vice Chancellor) (from February 2024)
* Nick Capaldi (Independent Governor)
* Roísín Connolly (Independent Governor)
* Paul Matthews (Independent Governor)
* Natalia-Mia Roach (Student Governor)

Meetings

Five meetings were held during the 2023/24 Academic Year:

* 09 October 2023
* 13 November 2023
* 11 December 2023
* 11 March 2024
* 10 June 2024

The Committee provided a summary report to the Board of Governors following each meeting.

# The Committee’s Work During 2023/24

Due to the sustained effectiveness of online meetings, it was decided that the work of the Board’s Committees would continue to be carried out virtually, whilst meetings of the full Board took place in-person.

# Strategy

Strategy 2030

## Strategy 2030 had been developed by the former Vice-Chancellor with the executive group in very different financial and policy contexts. During 2023/24 the financial position of the HE sector worsened across the UK, due to combination of static home tuition fees and falling home student numbers, a change in UK government visa policies and economic crises in the University’s main markets for International students.

## The current Vice-Chancellor, since beginning her tenure in February 2024, had worked with the executive group to establish a financial recovery plan to return the University to a position of appropriate financial surplus. A key objective in designing the financial recovery plan had been ensure that it could deliver a return to appropriate financial resilience while also shaping a transformation that would enable appropriate performance improvements in all four pillars of Strategy 2030 (Learning, Teaching and Student Engagement; Research and Innovation; International; and Civic Mission).

The Financial Recovery Plan and Transformation Programme have necessitated a refresh of Strategy 2030 and its KPIs to ensure the strategy aligns with the financial recovery of the University.

Measures of Success

## For 2023/24 Strategy 2030 had 17 KPIs which sat across five themes and a further four enabling strategy measures:

* Reputation (four measures)
* Learning, Teaching and Student Engagement (four measures)
* Research and Innovation (four measures)
* Global Engagement (two measures)
* Civic Mission (three measures)

# Environment Scanning

As part of the Committee’s role in the University’s strategy, environment scanning is an essential tool to enable it to develop informed decisions about strategic priorities. Environment scanning updates were presented through a PESTLE analysis, which identifies key political, economic, social, technological, legal, & environmental factors that could impact the University’s future. The Committee considered this information and advised the University on how to approach these developments. Key areas considered in the 2023/2024 academic year included:

Home Recruitment

## External changes for application in 2024/25 to the operating environment included a permitted increase to the tuition fee by Welsh Government to £9,250 and additional degree apprenticeship funding which was outlined in the HEFCW remit letter for 2024/25.

However, Welsh Government also committed to reduce the higher education budget in 2024/25 by £11m and to remove postgraduate grants and bursary incentives.

International Student Recruitment

## The sharp and sudden fall in International students was attributed to visa condition changes for dependents by UK government, increases in immigration charges and negative economic events in the University’s key markets. Additionally, competition was increased from Australia which had recently changed its student visa, adding two-years post-study.

Political Changes in Westminster and Cardiff Bay

The General Election on July 4 2024 culminated in a change of government to UK Labour party. The Welsh Government also saw its leadership change.

Other Factors to Note

* Graduate Visa Route retained.
* Senedd calling for more QR funding.
* HEFCW looking at sector finances.
* Data Futures project causing significant problems.

Inflation and Cost-of-Living

Throughout the academic year, the Committee kept a close eye on the cost-of-living crisis, assessing the impact it was having on both students and staff.

Inflation fell to 2.3% in the 12 months to April 2024 and potential cuts to the Bank of England base rate followed the previous year’s inflationary rises.

MEDR replacing HEFCW

The Committee regularly reviewed the developments relating to CTER the new Commission for Tertiary Education and Research (the **Commission**), which replaced HEFCW in 2024. Prior to its operation date of August 2024 it was announced that the Commission would be branded as MEDR. MEDR would have a broader approach to funding research and innovation and provide funding to higher and further education. Learners’ interests would be given equal value whether in vocational or academic learning and would be organised to meet employers’ needs.

# Performance

As part of the Committee’s commitment to oversee the development of the University’s strategic goal to be a Top 50 UK University, it received regular relevant reports throughout the academic year.

League Tables

As a widely used and influential measure of university performance, league tables can have a significant impact on attracting students. Therefore, consideration of the UK league tables is vital for developing strategies to improve the University’s overall image.

In 2023, the University’s general league table performance was as follows:

* 71st out of 130 UK providers in the Complete University Guide (up 1 place);
* 100th out of 122 UK providers in the Guardian University Guide (down 27 places);
* 78th out of 131 UK providers in Times and Sunday Times Good University Guide (up 15 places).
* 95 out of 128 UK providers in the Daily Mail guide.
* 479 out of 690 European providers in the QS European Ranking
* 1201-1500 out of 1,904 providers in the THE World University Ranking
* 351-400 out of 605 providers in the THE World Young University Ranking

Student Recruitment

## As the University’s main source of income is tuition fees, tracking the University’s progress towards its enrolment targets is important to identify areas for improvement. At each meeting, the Committee was briefed on the recruitment statistics and activities at the University. The Committee were apprised that recruitment activity was being intensified and this included the offer of more Open Days and new growth areas being identified. With work being done to maximise conversion rates and retention figures, some of the loss of income from student number falls could be mitigated against.

During 2023/24 the final position reached was a September intake of full-time home undergraduate applications rise of 16%, with offer exceeding 10,000 for the first time.

International applications for September were down 53% on the previous year, with intake expectations reduced by a similar proportion as sector challenges continued to impact demand. An additional May intake to the MBA had attracted 52 acceptances to date.

Postgraduate Research Experience Survey Results 2023

The Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (**PRES**)indicates how well the University supported Doctoral Research candidates. An initial overall satisfaction rate of 84% was provided, against a 10% completion rate. Due to the low completion rate across the HEI sector, the date for completion was extended by a further week. Overall satisfaction for Cardiff Met was then reported at 89% (at a 34% completion rate) out of 100 HEIs.

The Committee noted the improvements in the research culture score which now stood above sector average. Much of this was attributed to the work done to create a sense of research community which had seen many networking and meeting events convened.

Graduate Outcomes 2020/21

To assess if the University is effectively providing its students with the skills and knowledge to progress further in education or the workforce, the Committee annually reviews graduate outcomes. Strategically, this is also vital, as failure to deliver strong graduate outcomes could impact the University’s position in league tables and its ability to recruit students.

The latest data release showed significant positive progress in the Graduate Employability Measure of Success, reflective of work undertaken in recent years. Gains to the employability ranking were also seen in the Times and Guardian league tables. Despite these results, there were areas across the University that needed further work to be done and a series of recommendations had been put forward. There was a significant impact now to graduates decision to study further due to inflationary costs.

The 2020/21 graduate outcomes had however fallen slightly on the previous year, indicated in metrics such as:

* 94.3% in any kind of work or further study, down from 95.8%

# Fee & Access Plan Evaluation

## All Welsh Universities must annually submit a fee & access plan to HEFCW. Fee & Access Plans are about making “a significant and lasting contribution to widening access to higher education in Wales”[[1]](#footnote-2), showing how the institution is providing support for disadvantaged groups.

## The Committee annually evaluates the Fee & Access Plan, also a HEFCW requirement.

## The Committee discussed the University’s plans and activities that were being employed to achieved the FAP objective of widening participation of students from lower socio-economic backgrounds was being achieved. It was of note that further challenges to achieving wider participation in Wales were anticipated ahead, as student numbers in Wales were falling more sharply than other UK countries and this was more acute amongst lower-socio economic backgrounds.

# Academic Assurance

HEFCW Quality Assurance Statements 2022-2023

A key element of the Committee’s delegated responsibility is Governor-level consideration of academic assurance. Like with other years, the Annual Assurance Report was framed around ten internal assurances, mapped to the six Governors’ Assurance Statements and to the expectations of the revised UK Quality Code.

1. The Governing Body has received a report taking account of the external quality assurance review, and an action plan had been put in place and implemented as appropriate, in partnership with the student body.
2. The methodologies used as a basis to improve the student academic experience and student outcomes, to the best of our knowledge, robust and appropriate.
3. The standards of awards for which we are responsible have been appropriately set and maintained.
4. The governing body has considered a report on the annual dialogue between the institution and the student union or equivalent, scrutinised student survey outcomes and confirmed that action plans have been put in place and implemented, in partnership with the student body.
5. The governing body has received a copy of the relationship agreement between the institution and the student union or equivalent, and a copy of the student charter, both of which have been reviewed within the past year.
6. The governing body has effective oversight of degree outcomes and academic integrity.

An update on progress against the recommendations of the Spring Term 2022 visit was submitted to HEFCW in June 2023. The outcomes of HEFCW’s annual institutional risk review were communicated to the University on 25th May 2023 and a response to actions submitted to HEFCW in June 2023.

Spring & Summer Quality Assurance

The Committee also received spring & summer QA updates, which summarised the progress of activities relating to external review and sector QA developments.

Degree Outcome Statement 2021/2022

The Degree Outcome Statement evaluates the University’s degree classification distribution, ensuring that it aligns with national degree standards. The Committee receives this report each year before submitting it to HEFCW, and also assesses the University’s efforts to enhance best practices. In 2021/22 key metrics included:

* 76.7% of students achieved Good Honours, whilst this was a fall on the previous year, this still surpassed the target set out in the University’s Measures of Success for 2021/22 and that set for 2022/23 (70%).
* During 2020/21 Cardiff-based students would have been covered by Phase 3 of the University’s ‘No Detriment’ policy. This would have covered Level 5 modules for students graduating in 2021/22.
* In 2021/22, modules assessed at Level 6 were not covered by a ‘No Detriment’ policy. Instead, they were assessed under the University’s standard [academic regulations](https://www.cardiffmet.ac.uk/registry/academichandbook/Documents/AH1_04_01.docx)

# Complaints and Conduct

The Committee reviews complaints and conduct through an annual complaints and conduct report, and the OIA Annual Statement. Through this, the Committee can ensure that the University is meetings obligation to provide a positive learning environment for all students.

Complaints & Conduct 2022-23

The Annual Complaints & Conduct Report highlights trends or significant areas of concern that need to be addressed and contextual information. This aids in ensuring the University can continually improve its programmes, support services and administration. In the academic year 2022-23.

## Analysis showed that total complaints had increased slightly in numbers were increasingly complex. Complaints were dealt with by a dedicated team who could ensure a standardised procedure and provide training and support to staff concerned. Furthermore, processes had been strengthened by the use of specialist investigative officers and ensuring templated documentation.

## The University had good records for early resolution and performed well in the sector against any Office of the Independent Adjudicator’s (OIA) judgements. The Students’ Union also helped support students around their complaints.

**John Taylor**
Chair of Strategic Planning & Performance Committee

November 2024

# Appendix 1

Strategic Planning & Performance Committee Terms of Reference 2023-2024

**Committee Terms of Reference:**

**STRATEGIC PLANNING AND PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE**

Last reviewed: November 2023

Next review: November 2024

# Key Information

## Reports to: The Board of Governors

## Occurrence: up to 5 meetings a year, with additional meetings scheduled as required

# Membership, Quorum, & Attendees

## Quorum: 4 members, at least 3 of which must be Independent or Co-opted Governors

## Members & Attendees

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| MembersJohn Taylor (Chair) Professor Cara Aitchison (President and Vice-Chancellor) (until January 2024) Professor Rachael Langford (President and Vice Chancellor) (from February 2024)Nick Capaldi Roisin ConnollyPaul Matthews Natalia-Mia Roach (SU President / Student Governor)*[two Independent Governor vacancies]*Quorum: 4 members, at least 3 of which must be Independent or Co-opted Governors  | AttendeesUniversity Secretary Head of Governance and Clerk to the Board of GovernorsDeputy Vice-Chancellor Pro Vice-Chancellor Research and Innovation Pro Vice-Chancellor Student Engagement Chief Officer (Resources) Head of Strategy, Planning and Performance *At the discretion of the Chair other University officers, as may be appropriate, shall be invited to attend meetings.* |

# Remit

## The Strategic Planning and Performance Committee advises the Board on matters relating to strategic planning; the monitoring and evaluation of strategic priorities and performance against the strategic plan; the evaluation of progress relating to the overarching agenda of growth, diversification and improvement; and horizon scanning. The Committee also has a role in giving initial recommendations and advice to Board on Masterplanning[[2]](#footnote-3).

# Terms of Reference

## To consider and have authority to approve on behalf of Board:

## The development of and progress against the Fee and Access Plan, including reviewing the revisions to annual plans and updated guidance from HEFCW.

## External academic scrutiny relating to performance, especially the Research Excellence Framework and Academic Quality Assurance (in line with the Quality Assessment Framework for Wales), as well as the National Student Survey, Postgraduate Research Experience Survey, league tables, and other requirements from HEFCW and the Welsh Government.

## The approach for the annual Board awayday on strategy.

## The development and implementation of major projects, new enterprises and strategic investments.

## Anything other item or issue delegated to it from the Board

## To consider and recommend for Board approval:

## The overall strategic direction of the University in relation to the formal responsibilities of the Board and its members, including the Strategic Plan, Purpose, Values, and high-level measures of success. Identifying key issues for Board consideration, bringing ideas and working papers to Board for fuller discussion.

## Proposals for the general or long-term direction of the University through horizon scanning and review of big pictures issues in the sector and wider economy and society, both nationally and globally. Recommendations to inform annual Board horizon scanning session at awayday on strategy.

## The impact of major external changes and possible impact on the students and strategy of the University, including post-pandemic planning.

## To receive reports for information and advise the Board and/or the Vice-Chancellor as appropriate on:

## The performance of the University relating to the priorities of the strategic plan against high level measures and key performance indicators.

## The performance of the University in league tables

## The development and implementation of major projects, new enterprises and strategic investments.

## Emerging strategic issues arising out of the work of the Board’s committees.

## The Committee may establish time-limited Task & Finish Groups to undertake any of the above responsibilities on its behalf. The membership and reporting arrangements of such Task & Finish Groups shall be agreed by the Chair of Board, the Committee Chair, or the Vice-Chancellor, according to business demands.

# Operation

The Committee shall agree and present to the Board an annual report outlining the key business undertaken by the Committee during the previous academic year, with a particular focus on the decisions taken by the Committee on behalf of the governing body in accordance with the delegated authorities provided in these terms of reference.

The Committee shall provide a summary report to Board following each meeting, setting out what decisions have been taken via delegated authority. The Chair will provide an oral update to Board as necessary highlighting any issues that they need to bring to the attention of the Board.

The Committee may consider matters referred to it by Board, the Management Board or Academic Board (via the Vice-Chancellor), or the University Vice-Chancellor’s Executive Group.

# Appendix 2

Attendance at Meetings

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Name | Date** | 9-Oct-23 | 13-Nov-23 | 11-Dec-23 | 11-Mar-24 | 10-Jun-24 |  |
| Taylor, John (Chair & Chair of the Board) | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |  |
| Professor Aitchison, Cara (Former Vice-Chancellor) | Yes | Yes | Apologies | n/a | n/a |  |
| Professor Langford, Rachael (Vice-Chancellor) | n/a | n/a | n/a | Yes | Yes |  |
| Capaldi, Nick (Independent Governor) | Yes | Yes | Yes | Apologies | Yes |  |
| Connolly, Roisin Lara (Independent Governor) | Yes | Yes | Yes | Apologies | Yes |  |
| Matthews, Paul (Independent Governor) | Yes | Yes | Apologies | Yes | Apologies |  |
| Roach, Natalia-Mia (Student Governor) | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |  |
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1. [W22-19HE-Fee-and-access-plan-application-guidance-English.pdf (hefcw.ac.uk)](https://www.hefcw.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/W22-19HE-Fee-and-access-plan-application-guidance-English.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. The SPPC will consider Estates Masterplanning from a strategic perspective and make recommendations to the Board of Governors on the overall plan; the Resources Committee will consider the establishment, development and monitoring of the Estates Strategy including the acquisition and disposal of land and buildings and the effective and efficient use of resources related to this as well as the purchase of capital goods and services in accordance with the provisions of the financial regulations. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)