



# Governance effectiveness at De Montfort University

Report of findings from a review and recommendations to  
the Board of Governors

Author: John Rushforth Advance HE

21<sup>st</sup> December 2021 Final Report







|| **115**  
 || **X**  
 ||

**C**

||  
**X**

**115**

||

**115**

||

||





which were significant and systemic. The University acted, including commissioning an external review by Advance HE of its governance arrangements. The University has implemented a range of improvements and has been removed from the OfS monitoring regime.

Our report is structured around the recommendations we made in March 2020, and these are in italics. We have found that the University has addressed all of the recommendations,



## 4.2 Effectiveness

*The Board, under the leadership of the new Chair, should, as part of its routine business and building on this report, conduct a regular review of how effectively it is working, considering its evolving dynamics and relationship with the Executive.*

The University agreed with the recommendation and asked its internal auditors PwC to review effectiveness. They reported in September 2021 and concluded, Overall, De Montfort University has put in place effective arrangements to meet the majority of the CUC Governance Code and the CUC Audit Committee Code of Practice requirements.

The Chair also meets with Board members and discusses how things are progressing and if there are improvements that can be made.

In addition, the University has a standard item on each agenda, asking the Board or Committee on effectiveness. It asks whether they are content that the board/committee had been effective in discharging its responsibilities during the meeting and that all present had been enabled to be effective in their contribution.

After a while, such agenda prompts can become limited in ensuring any reflection. Some institutions have found it helpful to nominate a different member at each meeting and ask them for feedback on a couple of things they have found useful and any improvements they might want to suggest.

**Suggestion 2** The University could consider modifying the way it seeks feedback on the effectiveness of meetings.

## 4.3 Consultancy



+ Address strengthening higher education expertise

+ Diversity action plan for Board and committee appointments with agreed targets and/or indicators to track and review progress.

The University has recently completed independent governor recruitment exercises geared toward addressing the B reflecting the university's student and staff make-up. The recruitment exercise was carried out transparently, using an external search firm and recruiting against an identified skills matrix to recruit new governors possessing the right balance of skills, knowledge, and expertise. Among other requirements, the recent process seeks to identify candidates with a strong higher education background and non-executive director experience. In addition, DMU is also participating in the governor apprenticeship scheme <https://www.diversitygap.co.uk/>

## 4.6 Senior Independent Governor (SIG)

*DMU should consider appointing a Senior Independent Governor (SIG)*

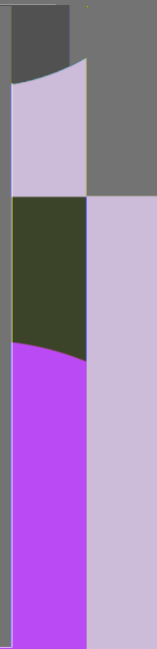
The Board has now appointed a Deputy Chair of the Board. This role encompasses the functions of a SIG as outlined in our report.

## 4.7 Board performance and development

+ Every member of the Board should undertake an annual review meeting (including the Chair)

+ Board member participation in training/development events should be recorded and reported to the Nominations Committee on an annual basis.







## 4.11 Support to the Board

*DMU should prioritise the appointment of a University Secretary who is appointed by and answerable to the Board. The Clerk to the Board would then report to the University Secretary.*

The University has reorganised the support to the Board, and there are now two posts - the Corporate Governance Manager and the Registrar (Academic)/Secretary. The latter post reports to the Chair of the Board in the Clerk/secretary role and the Vice-Chancellor in the Registrar (Academic) role. Objective setting sits jointly between the Chair and the VC for the relevant parts of the role.

## 4.12 Board papers

*The University initiate a progressive process to improve the quality of Board papers.*

The Corporate governance Manager has produced guidance on preparing reports for University Boards and Committees, which sets out clearly that authors need to consider the purpose of providing a paper for consideration. Board members also provide feedback on documents within meetings. In addition, the agenda has been reshaped to ensure a clear focus at the beginning of each session on strategic matters and the separation of assurance items and governance matters.

In our interviews, members commented on the level of improvement they had seen, coupled with a desire to continue increasing the focus on strategic issues. The University might consider the use of a 'starred paper' system whereby papers that do not require discussion are starred (or colour coded), and these are only referred to in the meeting if a member indicates a desire to raise a specific point before the start of the meeting. The University could also consider identifying the author of each paper and their contact details so that if there are points of clarification or detail a member wishes to raise, they can do so before the meeting.

Some members commented that although there had been a reduction, there were still



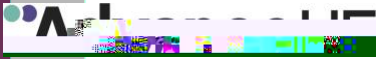


# Annex One: Review Methodology

## Document Review

We reviewed over 60 documents,





## Contact us

### **General enquiries**

+44 (0) 3300 416201

enquiries