



Minutes of the Norland Board of Directors Meeting

Wednesday 25th March 2020, 10.30am-12.30pm.

(meeting held remotely from Chair's residence: Bedford Gardens, Kensington, London)

Present

Martin Clarke, Chair
Michael Bray, Director
Kate Dicker, Director
Roberta Edwards, Director
Rosemary Heald, Director
Christopher Jerram, Director
Alastair Page, Director
David Timms, Director
Tracey Worth, Director
Janet Rose, Principal

In attendance:

Mandy Donaldson, Vice Principal
Elizabeth Harvey, Staff Representative
Eleanor Rose, Student Representative
Alex Read, Chief Financial Officer
Olivia Goulden, Governance Manager

BOA250320.1 Apologies

Apologies were received from Peter Hymans, Lucy Lovatt and Kriss Turner.

BOA250320.2 Chair's Communications

The Chair thanked the College for its handling of the current emergency situation and the day-to-day comprehensive briefings delivered to all staff and students.

The Chair commented on the current economic uncertainty and its potential effect on the College financially. A temporary plan would need to be produced but one which was fluid enough to take account of rapidly changing events.

BOA250320.3 Coronavirus Update

The Principal referred to her Coronavirus update paper which had been received by the Board prior to the meeting. It was NOTED that the College's overriding principle rested on its duty of care to all stakeholders and in supporting the national effort. The Principal thanked the Chair for his ongoing help and support particularly in enabling quick decisions

to be made. In addition the Principal thanked all Norland staff, in particular Mandy Donaldson and Alex Read.

It was NOTED that legal advice had been taken in respect of employment rights and legal obligations of Norlanders, NQNs and their employers during the current crisis. In this respect, extensive information and guidance had been emailed out to all such stakeholders and had been put on the Agency website. It was being made clear that decisions regarding employment resided with the employer and Norlander/NQN not the College and that the College was not giving advice as such.

It was NOTED that, due to the current situation, there would inevitably be a drop in the Agency's income.

The Principal reported that academic services and welfare provision for students was working well. Assessment deadlines had been extended by two weeks. Student engagement was good and included involving students in decision-making wherever possible.

The Principal commented that almost every aspect of the student experience at Norland was running normally, albeit remotely, with the aid of technology.

BOA250320.4 *New Declarations of Interest*

There were no new declarations of interest.

BOA250320.5 *Minutes of previous meeting held on 6th December 2019*

The Minutes were confirmed as a true and accurate record of the meeting.

BOA250320.6 *Matters Arising/Action Status Report*

It was NOTED that all actions were either complete or were ongoing, and to be considered at subsequent meetings.

BOA250320.7 *Report from the Finance Committee*

Alex Read gave a brief overview of the committee meeting and highlighted the following:

- The Teachers' Pension Scheme and the recent rise in employer costs;
- The Norland Foundation's 33-year forecast;
- The Draft Pay Report - it was NOTED that this was presented earlier in the financial year in order to achieve a more accurate picture of the budget given the future uncertainties around student numbers. Pay cost was a significant contributor to the overall cost base of the College; and
- Contribution analysis - this considered all College departments, including the Consultancy and Training Department.

Alastair Page drew attention to a reference under Any Other Business which questioned the future of the Consultancy and Training Department. The Principal however, reported that there was much scope and potential for the department to be sustainable and profitable. The comment was included simply as a precaution.

BOA250320.8 Term 1 Management Accounts p/e 31.12.19

Alex Read referred to his paper and NOTED that the term had fared better than expected *[REDACTED: confidential and sensitive information]*.

Alex Read explained that this was due to a number of reasons including Tuition Fee, Agency and NQN income being ahead of budget and all costs being less than expectations (with the exception of Property Costs where additional rates charges were anticipated for Oldfield Park).

Discussion followed in relation to the College outturn paper which was shared on screen.

[REDACTED: confidential and sensitive information]

It was NOTED that a total of 7 direct queries had been received by the finance department in relation to the payment of fees since the course had moved online due to the current crisis. There had however been many more queries posted by students via the Student Representative System.

The Principal reported that a proposed framework in relation to fee payment support had been drafted by the Executive. This included options such as deferring the payment of fees. It was NOTED however that there appeared to be a general feeling amongst the students that they were not getting everything that they would normally be offered on the course.

Accordingly, after extensive consultation with relevant stakeholders, the Principal reported that an agreement had been reached to propose a £1,000 fee reduction for each student for the summer term. *[REDACTED: confidential and sensitive information]*

Discussion followed.

It was AGREED that the proposal of a £1,000 fee reduction for the summer term for each student should be APPROVED. In addition, it was AGREED that this goodwill gesture should apply to all students and should not be presented as an offer. It was AGREED that the communication of this gesture should be carefully worded by the Executive Team to clarify that it related to the current situation only. **Action AR/JR**

The Principal expressed her thanks to the Board and commented that the gesture would be very well received by the students for whom this would be a significant sum.

In addition to the above, the Board AGREED that all existing students who paid termly should be offered an additional four weeks in which to pay their summer term fees. Those students who paid by instalments would be given the opportunity to pay in three rather than two instalments. All fees would still be required to be paid by the end of the financial year. **Action AR**

BOA250320.9 Tuition fee & Life Long Learning fee 21/22

Alex Read referred to his paper and explained that the proposal related to fees payable from September 2021. It was NOTED that historically fees had risen by an average of 2.57% per year over the last 7 years.

[REDACTED: confidential and sensitive information]

Discussion followed.

Given the unknown financial outcome of the current crisis, it was AGREED that to determine the appropriate fee level, remodelling using different student number scenarios was necessary over the next few months. **Action AR**

David Timms commented that in terms of OfS regulation, the key date for presenting the final tuition fee figure was October of the previous year i.e. when formal offer letters were issued.

It was AGREED therefore that the proposed fee for 21/22 would be presented at forthcoming Open Days with a disclaimer that this figure was provisional. Modelling would be used to finalise the figure in time for offer letters sent out in October. **Action AR.**

[REDACTED: confidential and sensitive information]

In the meantime, the Competition and Marketing Authority (CMA) would be contacted for advice concerning Norland's obligations to prospective students under consumer law, in respect of the publication of tuition fees. **Action MD**

Discussion followed as to the number of existing students for whom the ability to pay fees was affected by the Coronavirus. It was AGREED this would be monitored through the College's personal tutor support system, the Student Representative System and contact with the Finance Department.

It was AGREED that consideration should be given to establishing a hardship fund for students. **Action JR/MD/AR**

[REDACTED: confidential and sensitive information]

BOA250320.10 Risk Register

This was NOTED. Mike Bray commented that he welcomed the addition of comments being included on the risk register to outline what had changed since the previous version, and requested that this should continue. **Action AR**

BOA250320.11 Student Numbers

Janet Rose commented that the purpose of the paper was to outline the reasons the SLT believed student numbers had dropped and to reassure the Board by describing all that was being done to try to resolve the issue.

BOA250320.12 Compliance Dashboard

The Principal explained that the purpose of the dashboard was to report all regulatory returns which applied to the College. She explained that the dashboard was a summarised

version of a larger Compliance Register. It was NOTED that the dashboard was colour-coded to identify those returns which had already been submitted in the academic year and those which were required to be submitted within the next six months.

The Chair commented that it was beneficial to have such a document in order to obtain a better understanding of the extent to which regulation applied to the College.

Alastair Page commented that the document was another example of the high levels of organisation and management of Norland. The College was a small organisation which had to conform to standards designed for much larger institutions.

BOA250320.13 *Report from the Audit Committee*

The Chair commended the Audit Committee for an excellent report.

BOA250320.14 *Report from the Academic Board*

This was NOTED. The Principal reminded the Board that some of the activity of the Academic Board had been absorbed by its newly formed sub-committee, the Quality and Standards Committee.

BOA250320.15 *Any other business*

As staff representative, Elizabeth Harvey thanked the SLT for providing clear, concise and sensitive information to all staff since the start of the Coronavirus outbreak. As student representative, Eleanor Rose expressed her gratitude to the College on behalf of the students.

BOA250320.16 *Date of next meeting*

Wednesday 24th June 2020, Oldfield Park, 10.30am.