

London Metropolitan University: Independent Governor appointments

Introduction

[London Metropolitan University](#) (London Met) is seeking to appoint three Independent Governors to fill upcoming vacancies on its Board of Governors. The vacancies arose through the retirement of three Board members who have served on the Board since 2015/16.

The University wishes to identify suitable candidates to fill these vacancies from 1 August 2022. This will require the recommended candidates to be brought to the University's Board of Governors for formal approval no later than the Board meeting scheduled for 23 June 2022. Shortlisting and interviewing, will take place in advance of formal approval by the Board.

The University has an annual income of around £100m, and its annual reports and financial statements are published here: <https://www.londonmet.ac.uk/about/our-university/university-publications/statutory-accounts/>

Background

The [Board of Governors](#) is the University's supreme governing body, responsible under the University's [Articles of Association](#) for "determining the educational character and mission of the University, for stewardship of its resources and for oversight of activities". The Board has a total membership of no less than 11 and no more than 18 governors drawn down from a range of backgrounds, including the Vice-Chancellor of the University (serving ex-officio), one Academic Governor nominated by the University's Academic Board, one Staff Governor elected by the staff of the University, the President of the University's Students' Union (serving ex-officio), and between 7 and 14 Independent Governors appointed by the Board of Governors from outside the University for their relevant skills and expertise. The Board is supported in its work by major committees dealing with Audit and Risk, Governance, People and Remuneration, Finance and Resources, and by the University's Academic Board. Details about the University's current Board members can be found [here](#).

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion are the founding principles of London Met, and what makes it such a unique institution. Our organisation is distinctive, both in its eclectic and representative community of students and staff, in addition to the distinctive institutional offering of our inclusive learning environment. Everything we do is underpinned by our philosophy that every student deserves a chance to transform their life through higher education.

The majority of our students come from backgrounds that are typically underrepresented in higher education. More than 80% of our students are mature learners, just under 60% are from Black, Asian or minority ethnic backgrounds, and we have over 140 different nationalities represented across the student body. Many of our students have complex lives, some experiencing extreme economic disadvantage, and are often balancing their studies with work, or caring responsibilities.

London Met's learning and teaching philosophy is positioned to advance social justice, enabling students to see their identities celebrated in the curriculum, to develop an understanding of different perspectives and to give them valuable opportunities to learn about London's complex social challenges. The 2024/25 Strategy will see the University retain its commitment to social inclusion whilst also placing academic achievement and financial sustainability at its heart.

We are committed to supporting and celebrating our diverse body of staff and students. We have signed up to the Mindful Employer Charter and are championing the advancement of gender equality through the Athena Swan charter. We are a Stonewall Diversity Champion, a Disability Confident

Committed employer and are taking meaningful action to address institutional racism. London Met is also sector leading for parental leave entitlements.

We are developing strong connections with innovative businesses, organisations and public sector institutions across London. We provide our students with work experience, volunteering opportunities, transferrable skills training and for those interested in starting their own enterprise, access to our specialist business incubator, Accelerator. Our Strategy will see us increase our ambitions, focusing on impactful research and teaching that will make a difference to the lives of people in our community, our city and beyond.

The University's [Strategic Plan](#) for 2019/20- 2024/25 defines London Met's mission as "transforming lives through the power of education". Appointees to the Board will need to be sympathetic to the University's mission and values as well as having the experience and skills that would directly enhance the equality, diversity and inclusion work of the Board and the University. The implementation of the University's Strategic plan has been overseen by the Board and by [Professor Lynn Dobbs](#), who commenced as the University's Vice Chancellor in October 2018. Other senior members of the University's executive include: Interim Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic), [Professor Don MacRaid](#), Deputy Vice Chancellor (Student Recruitment and Business Development), [Mr Gary Davies](#), the Pro Vice Chancellor for Learning and Teaching, [Dr Zainab Khan](#); the Pro Vice Chancellor for Student Services, [Mr Mark Ellul](#), University Secretary, Nicola Le Faou, and Chief Operating Officer, [Mr Eugene McCrossan](#).

The role and commitments

The Board of Governors normally has six scheduled business meetings and at least one strategy day per academic year (additional meetings may be called if necessary). Board meetings (typically of 2 hours' duration during working hours) are usually held at one of the University's two central London campuses, although in the context of the pandemic the meetings have been held remotely throughout 2020/21. Independent Governors are normally expected to serve on at least one of the Board's major committees, which usually meet three or four times per year. The likely ongoing time commitment for a Governor is between half a day and one day per month, plus additional time for induction in the first year, and ongoing development activity thereafter. Service in a major role (e.g. as chair of a major committee) is likely to involve a substantial additional time commitment.

Independent Governors are appointed for an initial term of three years, and may be re-appointed by the Board of Governors up to a normal maximum of nine years' service. An annual review of the performance and development needs of Governors is conducted with the Chair.

Members of the Board of Governors have the duties and responsibilities of company directors and charity trustees. The Board is responsible for the University's compliance with legal and regulatory requirements, including the requirements of the Office for Students' Regulatory Framework. As such, they are expected to carry out their duties in accordance with the accepted standards of public life as set out in the Nolan Principles, and to ensure that the University's strategy, performance and use of resources are appropriately directed towards furthering its charitable purposes.

A description of the Independent Governor role is appended.

Candidate profiles

- To maintain a balance of skills on the Board and anticipate future vacancies, the University would be particularly interested in candidates whose skills, knowledge and lived experience would directly enhance the equality, diversity and inclusion work of the Board and the University (plus Estates, Health and Safety, Governance and Legal).
- In March 2021 the Board approved a target that 55%¹ of our Board and associated committees will be from a Black or minoritised background by 2025. The University is committed to improving the diversity of the Board of Governors. Candidates who help to ensure that the diversity of the Board (e.g. in gender, ethnicity and age) reflects the diverse makeup of the University would be particularly welcome.
- The University is interested in maintaining a balance between heavyweight candidates who have a depth of experience to draw upon, and fresher candidates who may have less experience but bring a sense of creativity.
- Candidates of a calibre that they could step into a major role (such as chairing a committee or acting as Vice-Chair) now or in the near future are particularly welcome.
- Candidates should be resilient and must be prepared to take and stand by unpopular but necessary decisions by the Board which are in the best interests of the University.
- Candidates should also demonstrate a high level of professionalism and integrity; perseverance; leadership; the ability to question intelligently and debate constructively; a strategic perspective on issues; and an understanding of the importance of collective responsibility and confidentiality in the Board's decision making.
- Alumni of the University would be ideal, however of greater importance is the right blend of skills and experience for the role.
- A real interest in or empathy with the higher education is essential, although work experience in the sector is not required.
- Candidates should be willing to get involved in the day to day life of the University, e.g. by attending events on invitation.
- As indicated, candidates should be committed to the University's mission of transforming lives through the power of education and meeting the needs of students from a wide cross-section of society, including the most socially disadvantaged groups.

Process and timing

The University's Governance Committee (chaired by Margaret Farragher) is responsible for overseeing the recruitment process and for making a formal recommendation to the Board regarding appointments. The Chair of the Board will also be actively involved.

The appointment of Independent Governors must be approved by the Board. It is expected that this will happen at the Board meeting on 23 June 2022 to enable appointees to start for the 2021/22 academic year.

It is anticipated that the search will involve the following stages:

- Development by the consultant of the 'long list'. The Vice-Chancellor and University Secretary will be available to meet prospective candidates for briefings on the role and questions about London Met.

¹ England and Wales Census 2011

- Consideration by the Governance Committee and the Chair of the final 'long list' and a decision on which candidates will be shortlisted for interview. It is anticipated that this will take place at a meeting to be arranged in March 2022.
- Interviews with shortlisted candidates involving members of the Governance Committee, in May-June 2022 (date tbc). Other Governors may be co-opted to the panel.
- Formal approval by the Board of Governors of the candidates who are recommended by the interview panel at the Board's meeting on 23 June 2022. Candidates who are recommended for approval will be invited to attend that meeting.
- Candidates will take up office on 1 August 2022, with induction activities to occur over the course of summer/autumn 2022.