

<b>Meeting of the UFI Board of Directors</b>	
<b>Date:</b>	February 5, 2021
<b>Time:</b>	2 hours (9:00-11:30)
<b>Place:</b>	Video meeting on Zoom
<b>Participants:</b>	<p><i>Board members:</i> Ólavur Ellefsen (Chair) Marita Rasmussen (Deputy Chair) Anders Bjarklev Elaine Munthe Marin Strøm (Staff Representative) Jónrit Halling (Staff Representative) Brandur Arnoarson (Student representative)</p> <p><i>Deputy board members:</i> Páll Isholm Heidi Poulsen Anna Kirstin Sigurðardóttir Martin Zachariassen Jóhannes Miðskarð (Deputy Staff Representative)</p> <p><i>University administration representatives:</i> Chik Collins (Rector) Johan Hansen (Director of Administration) Súsanna Jógvansdóttir Golan (Executive Secretary)</p> <p>Could not attend: Firouz Gaïni (Deputy Staff Representative)</p>
<b>Minutes by:</b>	Súsanna Jógvansdóttir Golan



***Purpose of meeting: To provide context and orientation for the new Board, regarding governance and the role of the Board, the past development and current context of the University and the principal current foci and priorities of the University.***

1. Chair's welcome and approval of agenda
2. University Governance (OE)
  - a. The Law and the Board
  - b. The role of the Board and the responsibilities of Board members
3. *Strategic Plan, 2020-2024* (CC)
  - a. Background to the *Plan*
  - b. The *Plan*
  - c. Plan implementation – progress and plans
  - d. Enabling measures – internal structures, governance and management
  - e. Principal current foci
4. Minister's key priorities (OE/CC)
  - a. External Evaluation, 2021
  - b. Bologna Lines
  - c. Campus Redevelopment
5. The Regulations governing the activities of the Board (OE)
6. Discussion (All)
7. Schedule of meetings for 2021(OE/CC)



## 1. Chair's welcome and approval of agenda

This was the first full meeting of the new Board, following an inaugural meeting addressed by the Minister on the 15<sup>th</sup> of January, at which the Chair and Deputy Chair had been elected.

The Chair warmly welcomed everyone and explained that the purpose of this meeting was to provide context and orientation for the new Board, regarding governance and the role of the Board, the past development and current context of the University and the principal current foci and priorities of the University.

The University Director asked if members were okay with the meeting being recorded for the deputy member who could not attend. The meeting approved.

The minutes from the inaugural meeting of the new Board (15<sup>th</sup> January at the Ministry) were then approved as well as the agenda for today's meeting.

## 2. University Governance (OE)

The Chair of the Board delivered a presentation on University Governance, along the following lines:

### a. *The Law and the Board*

- The position of the board in the overall governance of the University
- The laws governing the board, focusing on the public administration act (fyrisingarlógin) and the University Law (løgtingslóg um Fróðskaparsetur Føroya), especially in relation to the appointment of the Board, its overall remit and main responsibilities, as well as the limitations on its discussions and decisions

### b. *The role of the Board and the responsibilities of Board members*

The board:

- Has the overall responsibility that the law is followed
- Works for the benefit of the university
- Determines the overall organisational structure, strategy and development
- Ensures that the budget is sent to the minister for approval
- Establishes university main regulations that the minister must approve
- Appoints the Rector (and others on recommendation of the Rector)

Further discussion took place on study boards and the academic council. The Rector has the possibility to create an academic council, but it is not required by legislation. The study boards are running at each faculty, but the academic council has not been in operation for a long time.

The rector noted that since his starting at the university we have been in the process of ensuring that important entities, including the 'collaboration committee' and the 'health and safety committee', are actually operating, as well as creating really important new entities, to allow the University to function in a modern and professional way. This is already a lot for colleagues. It is his view that in due course an academic council should be called, and the University Leadership Team in fact spent some considerable time discussing and researching that last summer. However, it has been decided not to prioritise that just yet, as we are dealing with many other things already at the same time.

Prior to progressing with it, he believes it is important for us to consider the format of an academic council also – based on comparisons with other institutions. In the meantime, there is a lot more consultation and engagement with staff than was



the case previously, and to that extent things have improved a lot and the University staff are being heard and exercising voice in new ways.

Subsequently there were questions on the board's role in sending the university budget to the Minister for approval and also on aspects of when the Minister can remove members from the board. It was clarified that our finance department works within the framework of the finance budget suggested by the government and also closely with the Ministry. The Minister can remove the board if the board illegally puts the university in danger and refuses to correct the path (chapter 4 section 12 in the university law) but the Minister does not have broader authorisation than that.

### **3. Strategic Plan, 2020-2024 (CC)**

The Rector made a substantial presentation to the Board regarding the past development and current context of the University and the principal current foci and priorities of the University.

#### *a. Background to the Plan*

The Rector started his presentation giving an historical background to the foundation of the institution back in 1965 and how it has grown with additional faculties up until now. Some of the challenges we face today need to be understood in terms of the formation and development of the current university – even though that has been very impressive. The strategic plan 2014-2024 had a quantitative focus with the aim of having 1500 students at the University. When revising the plan in 2019/2020 it became apparent that it was not straightforward to assess that as we did not have sufficient, reliable data to measure success.

#### *b. The Plan*

Revising the *Strategic Plan 2014-2024*, to create the new *Strategic Plan, 2020-2024* demanded challenging some prevailing narratives at the University – about people, resources and culture – and also building knowledge, understanding and confidence of staff. The current plan 2020-2024 was introduced with extensive consultation with staff, students, government and others – in order to secure common commitment to a new shared vision, commitments and priorities. The revised plan has a more qualitative focus and a wider range of measurable commitments and priorities. Key themes are around modernisation and professionalisation, and on achieving growth of various kinds and at various levels through contribution, and collaboration.

#### *c. Plan implementation – progress and plans*

Two vital new entities mentioned in the Plan have been established – the Quality Unit and the Research- and Enterprise Unit. Pro-rectors have been appointed to oversee each unit (each is a Dean with a fractional appointment as Pro-Rector) and each unit has been allocated staffing of 1.5 people. The work of the units is progressing well but coming from a rather low existing level.

More generally a lot of progress has been made across the commitments and priorities detailed in the Strategic Plan – despite the focus on also dealing with the circumstances of the pandemic for most of the past year. This progress has been reported at previous Board meetings. The last full overview of progress was presented at the Board meeting last August, and another will be provided at the next Board meeting in March

#### *d. Enabling measures – internal structures, governance and management*

The Rector explained that the new vision, commitments and priorities could not be achieved with the previously existing structures and governance of the University. So, extensive developments have been taking place in that regard.



Deputy deans and faculty research leaders have been appointed for all faculties (except for one that still needs a deputy dean) making up a faculty leadership team in each faculty. This makes it possible for Deans to lead their faculties in a new way, and also allows for the development of leadership cadre across the University – which is very important for the future.

Similarly, the university director now oversees a more structured and modernising administration – having himself started that process in important ways prior to the arrival of the current Rector in 2019. The key administration staff meet once every two weeks as the Director's Group, which reports into the meeting of the University Leadership Team every other week (ULT = Rector, Director and Deans).

All of the staff in leadership positions come together every six weeks or so for a meeting of the Extended University Leadership Team, which is a vital factor for integration, working towards a single, integrated University, and a vital forum for discussion and concerted action to achieve that.

All of this change is creating the possibility for implementing factors necessary for achieving the strategic plan – such as annual reviews for all staff. Annual reviews, now called the 'My Contribution and Professional Development Conversation' (MCPDC), are mentioned in the strategic plan as goals for development of staff. Those conversations will start in February this year, between the Chair of the Board and the Rector, and will thereafter 'cascade' through the organisation.

HR and finance have been strengthened with additional staff. We have regular meetings with the Collaboration Committee (samstarvsnevndin), the Student Council (Ráð teirra lesandi) and have worked with an external consultant on improving working relationships between staff in the Faculty of Education.

We now also have a data group meeting regularly with the overall purpose of gathering data for the strategic plan implementation and a language policy which is nearly finalized. This was originally called for by the Ministry in 2007 (but did not happen) and will now be introduced shortly.

*e. Principal current foci*

Finally, the Rector listed some of the current foci for ongoing work – which are rather many.

**Discussion:** One of the Board members thanked the Rector for a very clear and full presentation, and then asked about how the staff are feeling about and relating to all of the many changes which are ongoing.

The Rector said that he thought generally people were responding very well but suggested that the staff representatives could perhaps provide an answer for themselves. The feedback from the three staff board members present was that staff are generally happy with the change. Some have expressed some concern about leadership and administrative tasks replacing time on teaching due to the newer structures, however, staff also understand that this is required to modernise and professionalise the University. The general feeling is that staff are onboard and some even excited about the changes.

It was further mentioned from board members that it is good that we have a data group as it will be important to see, amongst other things, where students are going after graduating and important to keep in touch with the job sector. GDPR may pose challenges for collecting these data and it will be important to find a right way to operate within the GDPR framework, which is a challenge for all universities and companies these days.



One of the Board members stressed the importance of collaborations with industry and others to achieve innovation and development on the Faroe Islands. Another member stressed the importance of strengthening international networks.

The Rector welcomed these emphases, which are fairly clear in the Plan, and which are also the subject of progress in recent times – although they were not the main focus of his presentation.

Corona has been a challenge for international collaborations, but these can also be built remotely, and that has also been happening.

In terms of collaboration with industry and others, we have been strengthening collaboration with the Environment Agency in the Faroe Islands recently, and with Landsverk, as well as with the IT Employers' Association, the Municipality of Tórshavn, and Visit Faroe Islands. Further collaborations are in the pipeline.

However, to some extent the focus of energy in the recent times has been on the structure and governance of the University, to make us better able to achieve all of our commitments and priorities, including those mentioned by Board members.

#### **4. Minister's key priorities (OE/CC)**

##### *a. External Evaluation, 2021*

This is to be set up and set in motion by the Ministry – rather than the University. The process of setting up the evaluation has not started yet, so far as we know. The Rector expressed concern. These things take time to set up, to conduct and to report on, and if it is indeed to happen this year there must be progress on it very soon.

However, the Ministry more generally seems to be challenged to be able to progress with key aspects of its responsibilities towards the University. The challenge seems to be a combination of having the staff required, and also the expertise required.

Another example of this is the urgent need for the new Executive Order for the University, which was supposed to be introduced last year, but then ran into problems very late in the process. This is also mentioned under Item 6, below.

##### *b. Bologna Lines*

We are meeting with the Ministry on this every three months or so and are working internally on our procedures and quality assurance. However, it was stressed by the Rector that Bologna requires action at the level of the national government to join the European Higher Education area and enter the process. San Marino have achieved this recently and it is vital that the Faroe Islands progress with this also. Another major issue is the need for external quality assurance beyond the University.

##### *c. Campus Redevelopment*

Negotiations between the municipality and the Ministry for us to take over the faculty of education building (Frælsið) have not been concluded. Lately there has not been any progress. The building is central to our campus plan.

The Board, through the combined efforts of the Chair, Deputy Chair and Deputy Board Member, has already decided to take a leading role in progressing discussions with government about this. The Chair of the Board is to assume the position of Chair of the relevant committee, with the agreement and support of the Rector, who, it has been agreed, needs to prioritise the other main aspects of the Strategic Plan in the short-to-medium term.

It was suggested and agreed that the relevant Board members arrange a further meeting with the Ministry on the matter and possibly also the municipality.



The student board member was also encouraged to take it forward with the student council.

It was highlighted that it will be important to inform staff about the process along the way. Regarding the overall campus plan it was further recommended that we keep a close relationship with the municipality on development of the campus as Tórshavn as a university city would also be of their interest.

On top of the above the Minister has also publicly supported the bi-annual intake of pedagogues again recently. There has however been no actual communication from the Ministry with the University about that so far. The Rector will take this up with the Ministry soon.

#### **5. The Regulations governing the activities of the Board (OE)**

This item was not discussed in this meeting. It will be on the agenda for the next board meeting 9<sup>th</sup> of March.

#### **6. Discussion (All)**

The members reported that the meeting had been very good and informative. Items for future meetings were proposed as follows:

**Executive Order:** As mentioned earlier, it was supposed to have been renewed before graduations last year but it did not happen due to some disagreement between the Ministry and the teaching and nursing unions. Diplomas for graduations in 2020 were authorised by the Ministry via a temporary expedient, as we did not have the required authorisation in the executive order.

There has been continuous work since then (as before) to support the Ministry in redrafting the documents for the renewal process, but there keep being delays and meeting cancellations due to the pressures on Ministry staff. We are seeking meetings with them on the matter regularly. The chair of the board has recently met with the Ministry to stress the urgency of getting it completed so that the University can give diplomas for graduation 2021. The chair of the board will follow further up at the Ministry and update on subsequent meetings.

**Report on milestones in strategic plan:** The rector will give an overarching report to the next meeting regarding where we are in the process for the different goals in the strategic plan, and thereafter on a roughly six monthly basis.

**GDPR:** It was suggested having GDPR as an item at upcoming meetings.

It was further suggested that the regulatory framework for the University (Reglugerð fyri skipan av Fróðskaparsetri Føroya) will be reviewed by the board in some later meeting this year.

#### **7. Schedule of meetings for 2021(OE/CC)**

There was some discussion on the proposed dates. The chair of the board will make appropriate adjustments and send meeting invitations for the next 4 board meetings shortly.

**The meeting ended at 11:30**