



Advisory Board Meeting November 2021



In the wake of the biggest global business shut-down of our generation, resulting out of the Pandemic, Advisory Board member **Billie Major, CEO of HMRC Business Unit**, and **Corporate Vice-President of Capgemini**, gave this year's Annual Advisory Board Guest Lecture, in its welcome return, having had to be cancelled in 2020 due to COVID-18 restrictions. Her talk was entitled "Business Transformation in the Pandemic" and explained how she led her team of over 3000 to successfully deliver the systems for Furlough and other emergency government measures which provided the essential financial lifeline for the UK throughout the Pandemic. The talk pulled no punches in the lessons learnt, including Billie's message to move beyond old ways of working such as presenteeism, and to trust in people instead and recognise that flexible working increases productivity.

The meeting the following day, chaired by **Baroness Gisela Stuart**, took place in [The Exchange](#), the University's new city centre civic venue, which also houses the Business School's [West Midlands Regional Economic Development Institute \(WMREDI\)](#), as well as incubator space for student start-up businesses. The Board began by celebrating being highlighted for best practice in October's print edition of EFMD Global Focus magazine on [what makes an Advisory Board add value](#). The piece was produced independently based on a report investigating 27 Business School Advisory Boards.

The meeting then went on to focus on accreditation mid-term review, corporate relations, and global engagement. The final area to be covered was a call to identify and recognise "colonised" knowledge and practices within teaching, research and the way the school operates, so as to find effective ways to dismantle them, enabling a decolonised reimaging of our Business School. The Board duly recognised that this builds on the School's commitment and vision to promote curiosity and thought leadership for responsible business and sits within a wider decolonisation movement in academia, questioning the impacts that colonialism has had on our societies in terms of racism, education and knowledge. The Board urged that to embark upon this means to think deeply, to consider multiple perspectives, and to situate knowledge in the context of the time, power and politics from which it is drawn. Members did stress the importance of language as we embark upon this work, with **Tony Sealey** cautioning that terms like decolonisation can, in themselves, "create a debate, even amongst 'the converted' as to what it means, which can then detract from the act of getting on with it". **Yogi Dewan** agreed, stressing that "this is a case of broadening our historic awareness, appreciation of global diversity and different business methodologies, which is highly progressive, so express it that way and don't create divides through overuse of what could be unnecessarily political terminology". **Rebecca Warren** concluded by advising to "identify a manageable goal, achieve on it, report back, gain the confidence of others and build from there. Don't overstretch in the first instance because you'll under deliver".



The Board in session, with some members also joining remotely.

