

BOARD OF GOVERNORS

27 April 2020 - via Microsoft Teams (including videolink)

CONFIRMED SUMMARY MINUTES

Contact Susan O'Donnell, susan.odonnell@northumbria.ac.uk, Secretary to the Board of Governors, with any queries about these Summary Minutes.

- Present: Chris Sayers (Chair), Alison Alden, Craig Apsey, James Bromiley, Lorraine Brown, Alasdair Corfield, Helen Fairfoul, Dr Stuart Fancey, Sophie Haagensen (partial), Lucy Hatt (to Four Key Objectives for 2019/20), Dr Graham Hillier, Peter Judge, Emmanuel Kabengele, Sally Pelham, Nick Pope, Claudia Shaw, John Taylor, Helen Thorne, Professor Andrew Wathey, Dr Jeya Wilson, Simon Yellowley.
- Apologies: Jean Brown, Amy Rice-Thomson.
- Observer: Dr Roberta Blackman-Woods
- Secretary: Susan F O'Donnell, Richard Elliott (Assistant Secretary)
- In attendance: Adam Dunlop, Jane Embley, Professor Peter Francis, Professor Steven Kyffin, Professor George Marston, Professor Glen McHale, Daniel Monnery, Simon Newitt, Professor Jon Reast, Lucy Winskell.

MAIN ITEMS DISCUSSED/DECIDED ON AT THE MEETING

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| 1. | <p><u>Introduction</u>
 <u>Chair's Opening Remarks</u> [Oral Report]
 The Chair extended the grateful thanks of the Board to all staff for the University's very rapid and effective response to the immediate demands of the Covid-19 crisis and the introduction of national lockdown, including the successful transition to online teaching and adapting to working from home. A sub-group of the Board had been established (by written resolution BG19/84) to provide informal support to the Vice Chancellor and the Executive in dealing with the crisis and planning for how to address its longer-term implications.</p> <p><u>Board Effectiveness Review update</u> [Oral Report]
 The Board of Governors considered an update on the planned Board Effectiveness Review, which was expected to report to the Board in September 2020. The Board noted the update and confirmed that the establishment of a viable timetable given the many pressures on senior staff, particularly relating to student recruitment and the management of the start of the 2020/21 academic year, would be part of the discussions with the preferred supplier.</p> |
| 2. | <p><u>Strategic Discussion Items</u>
 <u>Vice-Chancellor's Report</u> [Oral Report]
 The Board of Governors noted the key points in the Vice-Chancellor's Report, which focused on the implications of Covid-19 for the sector and the University in particular. Current focus was on student support work following the successful transition to online delivery. Disruption to the normal academic timetable was likely to affect both 2020/21 and 2021/22 before the "new normal" took effect for 2022/23, with many staff required to work remotely much of the time for several months to come. Priorities and guidance from UUK and the Government, including UUK's proposed sector support package, were outlined. The main challenges for Northumbria would include maintaining financial stability and adequate liquidity, addressing international recruitment in the context of limited travel options and planning for a socially distanced post-lockdown restart. The vision and strategic outcomes of the University Strategy remained valid, but business outcomes would need to be reviewed and re-prioritised. The Board noted the report and a Staff Governor thanked the Vice Chancellor for his leadership and communications with staff, which had been very positively received and had made a significant contribution to the overall resilience of staff in the face of the challenges of the pandemic.</p> |

Four Key Objectives for 2019/20 [Presentation]

The Board of Governors considered progress on the four key strategic objectives set for the academic year 2019/20 in the light of Covid-19, including both challenges to be addressed and opportunities to be considered. With regards National Student Survey (NSS), Northumbria response rates were currently good with indications of uplifts in student experience and feedback for all subjects but student experience challenges were now expected around blended delivery and the practicalities of teaching under social distancing. With regards to REF, the submission timetable had been suspended and revised dates were yet to be confirmed, with increased risk and uncertainty around impact case studies. With regards organisational culture, the University's response to Covid-19, emphasising flexibility and understanding that staff efforts were limited according to their personal circumstances, had been very well received and there was significant interest among staff in getting involved in work to develop the culture further. The financial challenges of Covid-19 were being addressed by adjusting rather than overriding longer-term planning. **The Board noted the update. The importance of closely monitoring student reaction and opinion to the blended model and its balance with maintaining Northumbria's on campus focus was emphasised. The impact of blended teaching on REF capacity would also need to be kept under review. The cultural benefit of showing that staff were trusted as part of the Covid-19 response was noted, as was the supportive and engaging communications to staff, students and applicants. The potential health and safety implications of staff working from home for a prolonged period would need to be assessed and monitored. Communications to staff around finance would be aimed at providing reassurance and confidence given Northumbria's relative financial strength.**

Covid-19 Scenario Planning Update [Presentation]

The Board of Governors considered the planning horizon for Covid-19, which covered at least the next two years and was focused on mitigating the short term (2019/20 and 2020/21) impacts and taking advantage of opportunities in the medium-to-long term (2021/22 +, the "new normal") – flexibility, agility and pace would be key. The current financial position provided a relatively good starting point for managing through the period of change without Northumbria-specific Government support. All scenarios regarding the impact of Covid-19 on various activities and associated income streams were worse than the original budget and a level of mitigation would inevitably be required. Flexibility in planning, responding to external events and managing our enablers would be key so that the University would emerge from the crisis stronger and better placed to take advantage of the "new normal". **The Board noted the update and expressed its confidence in the well developed and well considered scenario planning work; it commended the presentation, the scenarios identified and the potential mitigations, noting that these created a sound framework for future years based on the work of the previous five years.**

Student Recruitment Update [BG19/85 and presentation]

The Board of Governors considered an update as at mid-April 2020. Focus was on conversion activity and ensuring that applicants remained engaged and enthusiastic. **The Board noted the position and suggested that there should be clear messages about safety on campus for both students and staff as lockdown restrictions were relaxed. It could also be valuable to learn from the experiences of other European countries that came out of lockdown before the UK.**

3. Performance, Projects, Policy and Regulatory Matters

Students' Union President's Report – April 2020 [BG19/86]

The Board of Governors considered the Students' Union President's Report, which covered wellbeing support programmes and the establishment of online support communities to help students deal with the impact of Covid-19. Representation was being maintained via weekly feedback sessions with the Deputy Vice Chancellor and the Academic Registrar. Elections for the 2020/21 academic year saw a record turnout (up 31%) and the re-election of Emmanuel Kabengele as President and Claudia Shaw as Vice-President Education. **The Board noted the report and extended its congratulations to Emmanuel Kabengele and Claudia Shaw on their re-election as Sabbatical Officers.**

Monthly Finance Report P8 2019/20 and Q2 2019/20 Reforecast [BG19/87]

The Board of Governors considered the report, which highlighted that, because of the fast-moving Covid-19 situation, the forecast was changing frequently but the 2019/20 outturn was expected to remain ahead of budget; the cash position remained strong. The University remained some distance from the OfS liquidity threshold for reporting as a Reportable Event. **The Board noted the report.**

	<p><u>National Pay and Pensions Update</u> (Oral update) The Board of Governors noted an update on the national position.</p>
4.	<p><u>Constitutional Matters</u> <u>Board of Governors' Meeting: 24 February 2020 and Written Resolutions</u> [BG19/88 – BG19/90], <u>Summary Action List and Matters Arising</u> [BG19/93] and <u>Board of Governors Annual Agenda Plan 2019/20</u> [BG19/96] The Board of Governors confirmed the Minutes of its Meeting on 24 February 2020, and of Written Resolutions WR BG19/83 and WR BG19/84 as accurate records, and noted the Summary Action List, Matters Arising and the Annual Agenda Plan.</p> <p><u>Board/University Executive Away Day: 09 March 2020</u> [BG19/91] The Board of Governors noted the outcomes of the 09 March 2020 Awayday.</p> <p><u>Minutes of the Covid-19 Board sub-group</u> [BG19/92 and BG19/92i] The Board of Governors noted the minutes of the meetings of the Covid-19 sub-group on 24 March and 07 April 2020; the minutes should be treated as Reserved and would not be published.</p> <p><u>Executive Summaries and Minutes of Meetings: Employment and Finance Committee 02 March 2020 and Academic Board 01 April 2020,</u> [BG19/94-95] The Board of Governors noted the Executive Summaries of the most recent meetings of Board Committees.</p>

Susan F O'Donnell
Secretary to the Board of Governors
June 2020