

AUDIT COMMITTEE

17 November 2025 in room 209 Sutherland Building

CONFIRMED SUMMARY MINUTES

Contact Georgina Bailes georgina.bailes@northumbria.ac.uk, Secretary to the Board of Governors, with any queries about these Summary Minutes.

The meeting was preceded by a closed meeting with Committee members and the representatives of internal and external audit.

Present: H Thorne (Chair), A Fellows, J Hudson, I Wilkin
Observer: P Judge
Apologies: S Haagensen, P Turnbull
Secretary: G Bailes, B Lenney (Assistant Secretary)
In attendance: T Assadian [AC25/26-27], J Blewett (KPMG) [to AC25/47], A Clemmet [AC25/35], Dr S Corbett [AC25/29], Prof J Entwistle [AC25/35], R Groves [AC25/32], Prof A Long, L Mayfield, S McNally (PwC) [to AC25/47], C Stogden, A Sahota (PWC) [to AC25/47], J Taylor, Prof G Wynn [AC25/32-33]

MAIN ITEMS DISCUSSED/DECIDED ON AT THE MEETING

1.	<p><u>Introduction</u> <u>Chair's Introduction</u> The Chair noted that this would have been Sophie Haagensen's final Audit Committee meeting and thanked her for her contribution to the Committee as a Member.</p> <p><u>Vice-Chancellor's Horizon Scanning</u> [Oral Report] The Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive provided an update on national, regional and local sector and policy developments and their implications for Northumbria. The Post 16 Education and Skills White Paper had been published in early October ahead of the Autumn Statement and there had been several key announcements made: the UG tuition fee cap would increase in line with forecasted inflation for the next two years, with a commitment to legislate for automatic increases thereafter, though Foundation Year fees were frozen for classroom based subjects; student maintenance loans would increase annually with inflation and maintenance grants would be re-introduced, funded by a levy on international student fee income. The Government had committed to better understanding the concerns of Universities with regards to the Teachers Pension Scheme provision. At Northumbria all academic staff had received communications regarding the University's approach to pensions and were invited to a comprehensive range of engagement sessions. George Clarke had been appointed as the University's new Chancellor and would be presiding at the December Congregations. The University's NUSTEM outreach team won the 2025 Institute of Physics (IOP) William Thomson, Lord Kelvin Medal and Prize for public engagement in physics, recognising their work with children and young people across the North East and beyond. Dr Lynette Shotton and the team from the School of Communities and Education were finalists in the Public Health category at the prestigious Nursing Times Awards 2025 in London and Linda Lightly (Fashion technician) had been shortlisted for Outstanding Technician of the Year from the Times Higher Education Awards. The Committee noted the update and commended the awards and achievements and the approach taken to engaging with staff about alternative pension arrangements</p> <p><u>Strategic Risk Report</u> [AC25/17]</p>
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	<p>The Committee made a number of requests for additional clarification to the Strategic Risk Report and endorsed this for consideration by Board of Governors on 27 November. The Committee requested that the Risk Appetite Statement is formally reviewed and updated on an annual basis.</p>
2.	<p><u>External Audit 2024/25</u> <u>External Audit Report 2024/25</u> [AC25/26] The Committee considered the audit report of KPMG, the University’s External Auditors, on the 2024/25 Annual Report and Financial Statements noting that no concerns had been identified.</p> <p><u>Annual Report and Financial Statements 2024/25</u> [AC25/27] The Committee endorsed the ARFS, including the use of the going concern basis of accounting, for submission to Board of Governors on 27 November along with the final versions of KPMG’s report and the Management Representation Letter.</p>
3.	<p><u>Internal Audit Plan</u> <u>Internal Audit Progress Report</u> [AC25/28] The Committee noted progress on the implementation of the Internal Audit plan and approved extension requested for three actions, noting that they were considered reasonable by PWC as one new deadline was aligned to the academic year and two were due to fundamental requirement changes.</p> <p><u>Internal Audit Report: IT Vulnerabilities</u> [AC25/29] The Committee considered the IT Vulnerabilities internal audit report, noting that management had reviewed the report and broadly accepted the recommendations in the context of best practice however, additional time was requested in order to provide a more detailed management response. The Committee noted the report and requested that a progress report on the preparation of the response was provided to the Committee by circulation before the end of the calendar year, and requested that the full management response was shared with the Committee by circulation in January 2026.</p> <p><u>Internal Audit Plan – Scope of Non-allocated Audit</u> [AC25/30] The Committee approved the inclusion of an audit on Cyber Security in the Supply Chain in the 2025/26 plan.</p> <p><u>Outstanding Audit Actions</u> [AC25/31] The Committee noted that 21 out of 77 outstanding audit actions were fully implemented with 56 not yet due.</p> <p><u>ESFA Apprenticeships Audit Actions Update</u> [AC25/32] The Committee considered the outcome of the SLAS review and risk assessment of 2024/25 apprenticeship learner records, following the previous PwC Audit. This review assessed financial risks associated with legacy records and evaluated compliance since the introduction of the apprenticeship management system. The Committee noted the update.</p> <p><u>Internal Audit Annual Report and Opinion 2024/25</u> [AC25/33] The Committee noted the Internal Audit Annual Report and Opinion which had not changed since the Committee’s 15 September 2025 meeting.</p>
4.	<p><u>Policy, Risk and Assurance</u></p> <p><u>Student Protection Plan</u> [AC25/34] The Committee considered the annual review of the Student Protection Plan as required by OfS. The Committee endorsed the Student Protection Plan for 2024/25 for submission to Board of Governors on 27 November 2025.</p> <p><u>Health and Safety Report Q1 2025/26</u> [AC25/35] The Committee considered the Health and Safety Q1 (August - September) report, noting that there had been no fire related incidents during the period. The Committee noted the report, welcomed the additional information provided on sports incident reporting, and requested a copy of the management action plan for responding to the review on hazardous substances management</p>

Regulatory Compliance Annual Report 2024/25 [AC25/36]

The Committee considered the Regulatory Compliance Annual Report for 2024/25. Though the report focused on compliance activity during 2024/25, the assessments included in the report were current to provide the most up to date assurance; it covered requirements of regulators, and bodies with some quasi-regulatory functions, covering significant elements of activity across the University. **The Committee approved the report for consideration by Board of Governors on 27 November 2025, noting that the University Executive received six-monthly updates.**

Safeguarding and Prevent Annual Report 2024/25 [AC24/37]

The Committee considered the Safeguarding and Prevent Annual Report 2024/25. The University remained compliant and exhibited due regard for the Prevent duty throughout the year and safeguarding arrangements continued to operate effectively across all campuses. The report highlighted the work carried out to date on the implementation of the new OfS condition E6: Harassment and Sexual Misconduct. **The Committee suggested some amendments and additional information for inclusion in the report for inclusion prior to consideration by Board of Governors on 27 November 2025.**

Security Annual Report 2024/25 [AC25/38]

The Committee considered the Security Annual Report 2024/25 which summarised the University's approach to the implementation of its security policies and procedures in the context of UUK guidance on internationalisation, and increasing threats and risks in both a domestic and international context. The Security Risk Management Group considered that the 2024/25 annual report demonstrated sufficient evidence that the University deployed strong and robust security measures across all key security areas. **The Committee endorsed the report, requesting that it was updated to the reflect the findings from the IT Vulnerabilities internal audit review prior to consideration by Board of Governors on 27 November 2025.**

Regulatory Reportable Incidents Summary [AC25/39]

The Committed noted that there were no Regulatory Reportable incidents.

TRAC Approach [AC25/40]

The Committee considered how the 2024/25 TRAC return methodology complied with the OfS guidance following consideration by the TRAC Steering Group. An amendment to the process for compilation of the return for 2024/25 was recommended to ensure compliance following a review of the Margin for Sustainability and Investments and Workload Planning Process. **The Committee approved the TRAC approach for 2024/25.**

TRAC Benchmarking 2023/24 [AC25/41]

The Committee noted the analysis of the benchmarking data related to the 2023/24 TRAC return.

Annual Value for Money Report [AC25/42]

The Committee noted the University's internal Value for Money (VfM) report for 2024/25, as part of the supporting documentation for the Audit Committee's Annual Report (see AC25/43), providing a qualitative assessment of the University's VfM performance in line with OfS guidance.

Draft Audit Committee Annual Report 2024/25 [AC25/43]

The Committee approved the draft Audit Committee Annual Report for 2024/25 for consideration by Board of Governors on 27 November 2025 following amendments and final approval by Chair's Action.