

**BOARD OF GOVERNORS' MEETING**  
**28 April 2025 in Room 209, Sutherland Building, City Campus West**

**CONFIRMED SUMMARY MINUTES**

**Contact Georgina Bailes, [georgina.bailes@northumbria.ac.uk](mailto:georgina.bailes@northumbria.ac.uk), Secretary to the Board of Governors, with any queries about these Summary Minutes.**

**Present:** Dr Roberta Blackman-Woods (Chair), Prof Dame Janet Beer [to minute 24.203], Helen Fairfoul, Katherine Fawcett, Alison Fellows, Peter Judge [to minute 24.196], Hassan Kajee [from minute 24.175], Sophie Haagensen, Mark Larsen, Prof Andy Long, Ita McCrory, Arushi Sinha, Jan Thompson, Ian Wilkin

**Apologies:** Dr Birju Bartoli, Dr Stuart Fancey, Helen Thorne, Prof James McLaughlin, Dr Penny Rumbold

**Secretary:** Georgina Bailes, Beth Lenney (Assistant Secretary)

**In attendance:** Helen Bower [to minute 24.176], Prof Louise Bracken, Jane Embley, Sarah Glendinning [minutes 24.177-24.178] Professor Tom Lawson, Leon Mayfield, Dan Monnery, Alona Welby [minutes 24.177-24.178], Prof Graham Wynn.

**MAIN ITEMS DISCUSSED/DECIDED ON AT THE MEETING**

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| <b>1</b> | <p><b><u>Strategic Discussion Items</u></b><br/><b><u>Vice-Chancellor's Report</u></b> [BG24/88]<br/>The Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive provided an update on national, regional and local developments and their potential implications for Northumbria. Recent headlines reflected the financial strain on universities, with many announcing job cuts and cost-saving measures. Northumbria remained in a strong financial position but would continue to plan prudently to ensure long-term stability. UUK had set up a Transformation &amp; Efficiency Taskforce, led by Sir Nigel Carrington, to investigate how universities could partner, collaborate and deliver transformation and cost savings through new models and ways of working, and the Vice-Chancellor had recently met with Helen Hayes (MP and Chair of the Education Select Committee), who would be chairing a deep dive into the financial sustainability of the sector, focusing on the financial challenges including those faced by students, the government and employers. The Vice-Chancellor would be attending a roundtable on structured approaches to cost reduction and efficiency, financial improvement, and on how to drive the best value from estates and infrastructure, and in March the University had hosted a roundtable in Westminster titled 'Addressing Barriers to Opportunity', bringing together business leaders, parliamentarians, and experts to explore how best practices in social mobility could be shared and integrated into organisations. A second IntoUniversity Centre had recently opened in Gateshead, jointly funded by Northumbria and Newcastle Universities, and in partnership with Newcastle United Foundation. Work continued on the areas required to support the launch of the new Academic Structures including data and systems changes and estates considerations. The University had submitted an Athena Swan application for the institutional Silver Award, emphasising the commitment to its EDI ambitions. <b>The Board considered the update and noted that following the recent Supreme Court judgement regarding gender, the University reaffirmed its commitment to creating an environment where all colleagues and students felt respected, included, safe, and valued, and would continue to ensure that its policies and practices were regularly reviewed to ensure they were inclusive for all members of Northumbria's community whilst meeting the University's legal obligations.</b></p> <p><b><u>Northumbria and the Regional Landscape</u></b> [BG24/89 &amp; Presentation]<br/>The Board considered an update on the University and the Regional Landscape. In recent years Northumbria had become increasingly deliberate in its regional role as an anchor institution, cultivating and developing a range of strategic partnerships, based on a strong evidence base and understanding of the region. Regional challenges included the lowest healthy life expectancy of the English regions, a high level of health inequality, and consistently low and declining progression into HE with the lowest school attainment nationally. Strategy 2030 outlined the University's Commitment to playing a leading</p> |
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|   | <p>role in the economic and social transformation of the North East and beyond. The University actively managed and developed its relationships with other anchor institutions, including Port of Tyne, Darlington Economic Campus and the Offshore Renewable Energy Catapult, reporting biannually on all strategic partnerships to Strategic Performance Committee. Work was ongoing through CNUA, a collaboration and joint agreement with Newcastle University to make a positive impact on the city through initiatives including social mobility, Net Zero and the skills agenda. The North East Combined Authority's (NECA) Local Growth Plan over 10 years included five Northumbria projects, along with many other references to universities in the context of innovation, investment and skills. The University continued to build its reputational awareness through political engagement, developing its relationships with local and regional MPs and hosting several ministerial visits to campus in recent years. <b>The Board noted the report, commending the Partnerships team on a very informative and interesting presentation, and noted that a Skills Strategy would be imperative to the success of the Local Growth Plan and was an opportunity for Northumbria to play a role in solving what had been a long-term concern for the region. The Board also noted the importance of maintaining a consistent and coherent external narrative for Northumbria, that work was ongoing to grow the University's relationships with regional MPs, and requested that further detail on Alumni relationships and activity be shared with the Board at a future meeting.</b></p>   |
| 2 | <p><b><u>Performance, Projects, Policy and Regulatory Matters</u></b></p> <p><b><u>Students' Union President Report</u></b> [BG24/90]<br/> The Board considered the report of the Students' Union President. The recent elections had seen a record number of voters at 5,172 and society membership continued to increase, with two thirds of society membership and student representatives identified by the University as having at least one Widening Participation characteristic. Work was underway to encourage private accommodation providers to join the Safezone app in order to improve the coverage to more student residences, as were discussions regarding the future of the food pantry and the relocation of the Muslim prayer facilities. <b>The Board noted the report, congratulating Ita McCrory on being re-elected as the Students' Union's VP Education, noted that the Pre-Board session in June would include presentations from the new Sabbatical team and an opportunity for networking, and commended the Students' Union team for the depth of their engagement with the University's strategic priorities, in addition to their student support activities.</b></p> <p><b><u>Students' Union Returning Officer Report</u></b> [BG24/91]<br/> The Board considered the Students' Union Returning Officer's report as required by section 3.6 of the 2020 CUC HE Code of Practice. The report confirmed that the election was run in a fair and democratic manner which satisfied the stipulations laid out within the Education Act (1994). <b>The Board noted the report and requested that comparative turnout data be shared with the Board once available.</b></p> <p><b><u>Monthly Finance Report Period 8 2024/25</u></b> [BG24/92]<br/> <b>The Board noted the University's financial position and performance for period 8 (to March 2025).</b></p> <p><b><u>Pay Gap Report</u></b> [BG24/93]<br/> The Board considered the University's Pay Gap data for 2024 following approval of the publication of the Pay Gap Report on the University's external website by People Committee on 24 March 2025. The data showed some progress with a slight reduction in the mean gender pay gap, though the five-year trend showed that this progress was incremental and challenges remained. Women remained underrepresented in senior positions which continued to contribute to slow progress and, while the ethnicity gap was minimal, ethnic women faced wider gaps than their white counterparts. The disability pay gap had increased, which was likely influenced by an increased disclosure from staff in lower-graded roles and the report contained for the first time LGBTQ+ pay gap analysis which showed a mean gap of 4.6%. While there had been some improvements from the measures implemented in 2022, further work was required to accelerate progress however, this was increasingly challenging given the current financial climate and reducing workforce, turnover and recruitment to vacant roles. <b>The Board noted the report and noted that a round of voluntary severances in the previous year, along with cost pressures and subsequent recruitment freezes at neighbouring institutions, had led to a decline in leavers in 2025, and that the Academic Development Review in recent years had shown a positive impact on the gender pay gap and the intention was to continue that trajectory.</b></p> <p><b><u>Degree Outcomes Statement</u></b> [BG24/94]<br/> The Board considered the Degree Outcomes statement for 2023/24, following endorsement from Strategic Performance Committee on 7 April. The statement formed part of assurance relating to OfS' ongoing conditions of registration on quality and standards (B4 and B5) and the high-level figure showed</p> |

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|   | <p>that good awards for 2023/24 had dropped by 1% and remained below pre-pandemic levels. Although sector data was not yet available for 2023/24, the 2022/23 data showed that Northumbria continued to be ranked mid-sector on the good awards measure. The UK black attainment gap had narrowed to 4.1%, down from a peak of 36.5% in 2020/21 however, the small population of black students meant this figure could be highly variable. The attainment gap between UK domiciled students and non-UK domiciled students has closed marginally to 19.5% and remained an area of focus for the University, and the attainment gap for mature students was no longer evident. The gender attainment gap had increased in the most recent year and was now the largest gap seen in the last six years, driven primarily by a sharp decrease in the proportion of male students being awarded a first. <b>The Board noted the statement</b></p> <p><b><u>Annual Statement on Research Integrity</u></b> [BG24/95]<br/> The Board considered the Annual Statement on Research Integrity for 2023/24 following consideration by Strategic Performance Committee on 7 April. The Annual Statement assured the Board that the University met the Concordat commitments through its leadership, training and policies, and would be published on the University's Research Ethics and Integrity webpages if approved. Significant developments in 2023/24 included the review and update of the Misconduct in Research Policy, significant changes to the University's consent and participation information documentation, and the development of a process to support research on political extremism. <b>The Board approved the annual statement and noted that the number of Research Misconduct cases at the University was considered to be proportionate with the wider sector.</b></p> <p><b><u>Researcher Development Concordat</u></b> [BG24/96]<br/> The Board considered the Annual Statement on the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers and an updated version of the Concordat Action Plan, following consideration by Strategic Performance Committee on 7 April. Presentation of an annual statement to Board of Governors and subsequent publication demonstrated the University's commitment to the Concordat. The Statement covered the research environment, research culture, career development for researchers and any employment issues and the Action Plan identified opportunities for further development in the next twelve months. <b>The Board noted the Annual Statement on the Concordat approved the Annual Report on the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers and the updated version of the Concordat Action Plan 2023-26, and approved the Annual Statement for publication on the external website.</b></p> |
| 3 | <p><b><u>Chair's Reports</u></b><br/> <b><u>People Committee: 24 March 2025</u></b> [BG24/98]<br/> The Board noted that at its 24 March meeting People Committee had approved the Pay Gap Report 2024 for publication on the University external website and noted that the Committee was keen to meet more colleagues across the University, and the secretariat were working to identify further opportunities to do so.</p> <p><b><u>Academic Board: 26 March</u></b> [BG24/99]<br/> The Board noted that at its 26 March meeting the Committee had considered and endorsed updates on many of the items on the agenda for this meeting. Considered the Student Appeals and Complaints Annual Report for 2023/24, and the Future Academic Calendar to 2027/28, approved changes to the Academic Regulations for Taught Awards relating to borderline decisions in the classification of an award and considered reports from its Sub-Committees, including from International Committee a discussion and analysis of the attainment gap for International students and the actions being taken to address it.</p> <p><b><u>Strategic Performance Committee: 7 April</u></b> [BG24/100]<br/> The Board noted that at its 7 April meeting the Committee had considered and endorsed updates on many of the items on the agenda for this meeting, considered a rich and comprehensive deep dive into the Driving Social Mobility Strategic Ambition, noted that the deep dive presentations continued to be a valuable reporting mechanism used for multiple purposes, providing a level of detail and assurance to various audiences and generating a good level of meaningful discussion, and considered a quarterly update on Student Experience and Learning Outcomes.</p>   |

Beth Lenney  
Assistant Secretary to the Board of Governors  
May 2025