

BOARD OF GOVERNORS' MEETING

3 March 2025 in Room 103, First Floor, Northumbria University London Campus

CONFIRMED SUMMARY MINUTES

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

Present: Dr Roberta Blackman-Woods (Chair), Dr Birju Bartoli [to Student Recruitment], Prof Dame Janet Beer, Helen Fairfoul, Dr Stuart Fancey, Katherine Fawcett, Alison Fellows, Peter Judge, H Kaje, Sophie Haagen, Mark Larsen, Prof Andy Long, Ita McCrory, Dr Penny Rumbold, Arushi Sinha, Jan Thompson, Helen Thorne, Ian Wilkin.

Apologies: Prof James McLaughlin, Prof Louise Bracken

Secretary: Georgina Bailes and Beth Lenney (Assistant Secretary).

In attendance: Helen Bower [to Student Recruitment], Dr Guy Brown [to University Income Diversification Plan] Jane Embley, Professor Tom Lawson, Mark Gill [BG24/68], Prof George Marston [BG24/75], Leon Mayfield, Dan Monnery, Gary Tideswell [BG24/75], Prof Graham Wynn.

MAIN ITEMS DISCUSSED/DECIDED ON AT THE MEETING

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| 1 | <p><u>Strategic Discussion Items</u></p> <p><u>Vice-Chancellor's Report</u> [BG24/67]</p> <p>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. The University awaited further Government announcements and greater clarity on higher education reforms which were expected around the Spring Spending Review, and UUK had set up a Transformation & Efficiency Taskforce to investigate how universities could partner, collaborate and deliver transformation and cost savings through new models and ways of working. The high winds of Storm Eowyn had caused some damage to Lipman and Squires buildings, thankfully there were no injuries, but a number of colleagues had been displaced and teaching spaces for students had to be moved. It had recently been announced that the Centre for Writing, in partnership with New Writing North, had been supported by the Department for Culture, Media, and Sport (DCMS) who had awarded the centre £5m from its Cultural Development Fund, and Prof John Woodward had recently been named Education Champion at the Northern Leaders Awards for his work to develop Northumbria's North East Space Skills and Technology Centre. The University had been nominated for three categories in the National Apprenticeships Guide awards, and Lol Crawley, Film and TV Production alumnus, won the Best Cinematography BAFTA and Oscar awards for his work on <i>The Brutalist</i>. The Board noted the update, commending both the level of regional engagement and the number of research grants reported, and noted that, whilst tuition fees had increased, the lack of increase to student maintenance loans and the household income threshold created a larger barrier for prospective students.</p> <p><u>Student Recruitment – Semester Two 2024/25 and 2025/26 Intake</u> [Presentation]</p> <p>The Board noted an update on student recruitment.</p> <p><u>University Income Diversification Plan</u> [BG24/68]</p> <p>The Board considered the University Income Diversification Plan following consideration by Finance and Resources Committee on 3 February 2025. Plans had been set out for the identification and delivery of new income growth over the five year strategic period to 2030, in support of financial sustainability. These initiatives were regularly reviewed and implementation was overseen by a monthly Income Group chaired by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor. The Board noted the update, noting that over the course of the Strategy new growth initiatives would be identified and some of those currently under investigation may not succeed, therefore plans would evolve over the strategic period and the</p> |
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	<p>discipline of a prioritised set of growth plans would increase the likelihood of success through greater focus and alignment of growth plans across faculties and services of the University.</p> <p><u>University and CUC Responses to Consultation on OfS Strategy 2025-2030</u> [BG24/69]</p> <p>The Board considered the University and CUC responses to the consultation on the OfS Strategy 2025-2030 which had been submitted on 20 February 2025. The consultation sought the views of stakeholders as to whether proposals gave rise to any unintended consequences, and the effect they would have on specific types of providers, particular groups students and individuals with protected characteristics. Both University and CUC responses were supportive of the general tone of the strategy, OfS's recognition of its role in protecting the public interest in Higher Education, and the move to a more collaborative approach and made recommendations for improvement were made regarding Government alignment, equality of opportunity, quality and student experience, and regulatory prioritisation. Concerns were highlighted in relation to a potential increase in regulatory burden and a lack of detail regarding regulatory scope, data collection across the sector and OfS's expectations for university boards. The OfS response to the consultation was expected to be published in Spring 2025 alongside their 2025-2030 strategy. The Board noted the update.</p>
2	<p><u>Performance, Projects, Policy and Regulatory Matters</u> <u>OfS Five-Year Forecast – Final Submission Update</u> [BG24/70]</p> <p>The Board noted an update on the OfS Five Year Forecast and that following submission of the forecast, some automatically generated queries had been received relating to rounding differences and consistency of data between sections. All queries had been resolved and were considered standard and in line with previous years' submissions.</p> <p><u>Students' Union President Report</u> [BG24/71]</p> <p>The Board considered the report of the Students' Union President. The Students' Union had achieved the Investors in People Gold standard, improving on the previous Silver Award standard held since 2012, and had been shortlisted for the Educate North 2025 awards for their work in Student Wellbeing and Mental Health. Society membership was at its highest ever with 5,266 members, representing a fifth of all Northumbria undergraduates, and work to support students with cost-of-living concerns was ongoing. The 2023/24 Annual Quality Review had highlighted that existing exam resit timescales were disadvantageous to international students and that greater flexibility was required, and the Student's Union and University were working together to address this. Students' Union teams had visited the London Campus several times since the beginning of the 2024/25 academic year, participating in Induction Week, GOAL days, campaigns and a student survey and each team would continue to visit the London Campus at least once per semester, with an aim to align the delivery of activities and campaigns across the Newcastle and London campuses. Nominations for the 2025/26 Sabbatical Elections had closed and voting would open on 10 March. The Board noted the report, commending the number of activities and campaigns the teams were engaged in, and noted that 31% of election nominations had been received from students at the London Campus, with 10 nominations received for the London Campus Rep.</p> <p><u>Academic Structure to Deliver Strategy 2030</u> [BG24/72]</p> <p>The Board considered an update on the Academic Structure to deliver Strategy 2030. The final proposals for Faculty and School structures, leadership and management structure, contractual arrangements and the plan to appoint to roles had been agreed following a period of consultation. From September 2025 there would be three Faculties and 12 Schools, and the changes would support the University to achieve its Strategic Ambitions relating to research quality, experiential learning and an inclusive economy. The Board noted the proposals and noted that work was ongoing between Faculty Registrars to ensure alignment of working practices across the three Schools.</p> <p><u>Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom at Northumbria</u> [BG24/73]</p> <p>The Board considered the proposed approach to Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom at Northumbria. Following the recent resumption of the application of the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023, and the expected resumption of some of the regulatory requirements set out by the OfS under the previous government, universities in the UK would have greater duties to take steps to secure freedom of speech, establish clear codes of practice for freedom of speech, as well as new duties to promote the importance of freedom of speech and academic freedom. As the University already had an existing suite of policies and procedures in place to ensure it protected freedom of speech and academic freedom, it was proposed to build on that suite with a specific emphasis on promotion. The University had responded to the OfS's consultation on their plans to regulate in line with the legislation and an initial action plan had been created with specific issues would be managed by a Freedom of</p>

	<p>Speech and Academic Freedom Panel, chaired by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, which would be advisory to the University Executive. It was expected that the proposals would not require additional staff, resources, or financial outlay, and that they would positively impact the University's regulatory compliance with OfS's Condition E2 (adequate and effective management and governance), as well any new Condition relating to Freedom of Speech. The Board note the proposal, noting that the new legislation increased the responsibility to actively promote Freedom of Speech in addition to upholding it, and that Students' Union representation would be included in the proposed Freedom of Speech and Academic Panel as appropriate. Further updates would be provided to People Committee and the Board of Governors in due course, particularly regarding reporting and oversight requirements.</p> <p><u>Monthly Finance Report Period 6 2024/25</u> [BG24/74] The Board noted the University's financial position and performance for period 6 (to January 2025), following consideration from Finance and Resources Committee on 3 February 2025.</p> <p><u>Health and Safety Report Q2 2024/25</u> [BG24/75] The Board considered the Health and Safety Q2 (October - December) report, following consideration from Audit Committee on 17 February 2025, noting that there had been one near-miss fire incident at Coach Lane Campus caused by the burning out of a power cable supply which was currently being investigated. The Board noted the report, noting that this was Prof George Marston's last meeting of the Board and thanked him for his support to the Board during his time at the University.</p> <p><u>Strategic Risk Report</u> [BG24/76] The Board approved the updated Strategic Risk Report, following endorsement from Audit Committee on 17 February 2025.</p>
3	<p><u>Chair's Reports</u></p> <p><u>Finance and Resources Committee: 3 February 2025</u> [BG24/77] The Board noted that at its 3 February meeting Finance and Resources Committee had considered and endorsed updates on many of the items on the agenda for this meeting, received updates on Student Recruitment and University Income Diversification Plans and approved contracts for the development of laboratories in Ellison Building, and Anglian Water t/a Wave Utilities for water supplies.</p> <p><u>London Campus Board of Directors: 10 February 2025</u> [BG24/78] The Board noted that at its 10 February meeting the London Campus Board had considered the recruitment position and performance of the London Campus and approved the dividend relating to prior years payable to QAHE.</p> <p><u>Audit Committee: 17 February 2025</u> [BG24/79] The Board noted that at its 17 February 2025 meeting Audit Committee had considered and endorsed many of the items on the agenda for this meeting and considered an update on UKRI Funding Assurance which confirmed that University had been reinstated to Moderate Assurance classification.</p> <p><u>Academic Board: 20 February 2025</u> [BG24/80] The Board noted that at its 20 February 2025 meeting Academic Board had approved the inclusion of a new award in the Assessment Regulations for Taught Awards, and a level 5 Foundation Degree in Science for the newly developed Nursing Associate Degree Apprenticeship, considered the External Examiners Reports Summary, noting that some issues had been raised several times across multiple years however, changes had been recently made in the Academic Registry team to support this area of work, and approved the proposed actions in response to University level issues and queries.</p>

Beth Lenney
Assistant Secretary to the Board of Governors
March 2025