

BOARD OF GOVERNORS' MEETING
27 November 2025 in Room 209, Sutherland Building, City Campus West

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), Prof Dame Janet Beer, Helen Fairfoul, Katherine Fawcett, Alison Fellows, Sophie Haagensen, Hassan Kajee, Mark Larsen, Prof Andy Long, Ita McCrory, Jan Thompson, Ian Wilkin, Dr Birju Bartoli, Helen Thorne, Dr Penny Rumbold, Mary Udeze.

Apologies: Dr Birju Baroli, Dr Stuart Fancey, Peter Judge

Secretary: Georgina Bailes, Beth Lenney (Assistant Secretary)

Observer: Kim Ansell (Advance HE)

In attendance: Helen Bower [to Student Recruitment], Ashley Clemmet [BG25/32], Prof Louise Bracken, Prof Jane Entwistle [BG25/32], Jane Embley, Victoria Kent [BG25/57], Professor Tom Lawson, Leon Mayfield, Paul Steadman [BG25/33] Jack Taylor [BG25/34, BG25/48 and BG25/49], Prof Graham Wynn.

MAIN ITEMS DISCUSSED/DECIDED ON AT THE MEETING

1 Chair's Opening Remarks [Oral Report]

The Chair noted that the agenda included year-end items which in previous years had been considered in an online Year-End Special meeting, separate to the December Board meeting. This year the Board were trialing a combined meeting, encompassing both the year-end and standard Board business, the effectiveness of which would be reviewed ahead of the 2026/27 Board and Committee schedule being agreed.

The Chair noted that this was Sophie Haagensen's final meeting of the Board and thanked her for her contribution to the Board and its Committees during her term of office as an Independent Governor.

The Chair reported that the CUC were conducting a review of the Code of Practice and had invited Governors from across the sector to take part in a set of working groups. The Northern Group of CUC members were also reviewing the Post-16 White Paper alongside the priorities set out by Advance HE.

Declarations of Governors' Interests [Oral Report]

There were no declarations of interest in any items on the agenda.

2 Strategic Discussion Items

Vice-Chancellor's Report [BG25/27]

The Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive provided an update on national, regional and local developments and their potential implications for Northumbria. The Government had published the Post-16 Skills and Higher Education White Paper which included domestic undergraduate tuition fee cap increases in line with forecast inflation for two years, reintroduction of maintenance grants funded through an international student fee levy, and strengthened Office for Students powers to impose recruitment limits on poor-quality provision. The Government budget had confirmed the international student fee levy and that it would be introduced at a flat fee of £925 per international student from 2028/29 and would be based on 2027/28 student numbers. The fee would be collected by the OfS, rather than the Treasury, and was expected to be allocated to Higher Education and Skills and fund maintenance grants. The Budget had also announced changes to the salary sacrifice rules in relation to pension contributions which would come into effect in April 2029, UCEA estimated that this change would have a £20m impact on the sector. The University had joined the Northern Health Science Alliance (NHSA), a partnership of leading universities and NHS trusts driving health research and innovation across the North of England. The five North-East universities would be joining with the North East Combined Authority to launch a

Spin-out Inspire Fund focused on transforming cutting-edge research into high-growth business in the region. Engagement had begun regarding a Total Reward Approach, offering greater flexibility and personal choice around pay and pensions, while helping the University manage costs sustainably. **The Board noted the update noting that the proposed international levy disproportionately affected some universities and that conversations regarding its implementation were on-going, and UK fee inflation had been confirmed at c.2.65% which fell below expectations.**

Student Recruitment 2025/26 [Presentation]

The Board noted an update on student recruitment.

Alumni and Philanthropy Plan (2024-30) Update [BG25/57]

The Board noted an update on the Alumni and Philanthropy Plan, commended the work of the Alumni and Philanthropy team and the quality of the forward plan, noting that this was the first time the report had been considered by the Board, that it reflected the positive conversations which had taken place with several Members prior to the meeting, and that the team would continue to work with Governors who were keen to engage regarding the potential support that they could offer.

3 Performance, Projects, Policy and Regulatory Matters

Students' Union President Report [BG25/28]

The Board considered the report of the Students' Union President. Freshers' week 2025 had been very successful, with improvements including a two-week events programme induction delivering a comprehensive suite of onsite events, a redesigned Welcome Fair to reduce queueing within the Quad, and expanded quiet hours for neurodiverse students. Black History Month events had been delivered successfully, including the launch of the black history bookshelf and replication of the Roots to Routes event in London. A PG welcome week had been launched, as well as a week of activities for new students in London, and SU staff would visit the London Campus every two weeks. Programme representative recruitment had improved significantly with 972 representatives on file, and 'Movember' had been launched as a collaboration between Sport and the SU focused on men's mental health. The first Go Out and Listen Day saw over 900 students verbally engaged with in one day, with a focus on understanding their experiences and perceptions of timetabling. **The Board noted the report, commended the success of the welcome events and initiatives and thanked the SU for their commitment to visit the London Campus every two weeks, and noted that the Students as Partners forum was showing increased positive engagement.**

Monthly Finance Report Period 3 2025/26 [BG25/29]

The Board noted the University's financial position and performance for period 3 (to 31 October 2025).

Student Protection Plan [BG25/30]

The Board considered the updated Student Protection Plan following endorsement by Audit Committee on 17 November and Academic Board on 21 October. The plan fulfilled the University's ongoing condition of registration C3, requiring an approved Student Protection Plan appropriate for regulatory risk assessment and had been updated following annual review requirements. The plan had previously been invoked for the Amsterdam campus closure which was reported to OfS in April 2023. The University must take all reasonable steps to implement the provisions if events set out in the plan occurred and the plan would be made available to all prospective and current students alongside key documents including the Handbook of Student Regulations. Advice and support would be offered through the Ask4Help team with additional independent support from the Students' Union and students not content with proposed outcomes could raise formal complaints through established procedures. **The Board approved the Student Protection Plan, noting that the wording of the plan had been updated to be more student centric and to remove references to Amsterdam Campus, and that the Students' Union were involved in the drafting of the plan and their feedback would be included in future iterations of the report.**

Equality Diversity and Inclusion Annual Report 2024/25 [BG25/31]

The Committee considered the EDI Annual Report 2024-2025 following endorsement by People Committee on 10 November. The University had been awarded a Race Equality Charter Bronze award in October 2024 and an Athena Swan Charter Silver award in June 2025 with all academic departments and faculties continued to hold a Bronze Athena Swan Award. The Faculty of Business and Law had

applied for a Silver Award which had recently been confirmed as successful. A new Disability Action Plan had been developed in summer 2025 with the purpose of creating meaningful and lasting change. Work to increase disclosure rates had led to material increases in disclosure which supported the commitment to reducing the pay gap and the University was able to report LGBT pay gaps for the first time in March 2025 due to the improvements in EDI demographic data. There had been a 1% increase in Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic staff, which was now reported as 15.4% of the workforce. A range of Equality Leadership Development programmes had been offered as part of the commitment to develop future leaders and colleague Equality Networks had continued to engage with their members. **The Board approved the Equality Diversity and Inclusion Annual Report 2024/25.**

Health and Safety Report Q1 2025/26 [BG25/32]

The Board considered the Health and Safety Report for Q1 2025/26, following consideration by Audit Committee on 17 November. DSE training completion rates remained at 98%, exceeding the 95% target, Fire Safety training completion was at 92% and Health, Safety and Stress Management for Managers at 89%, both below the 95% target. Key performance indicators showed planned preventative maintenance, asbestos management and water hygiene rates were at or above target. The number of trained Fire Marshals had increased by 14% since the last reporting period, and there had been no fire-related incidents during the period. Following the Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service Letter of Deficiencies all actions, except for one which required manufactured parts, had been completed. The remaining action was expected to be completed by the end of December 2025. The University had received assurances that the Sport team had a strong governance framework in place which went beyond the minimum required standards, were RoSPA Gold rated and had a QUEST rating of Excellent. Both concussion incidents and injuries were below the national CRISP averages, and Enhanced reporting was now in place and would inform future reporting. **The Board noted the report, noting that Audit Committee had received assurances that the University had considered changes in research capability and facilities and were seeking external expertise.**

Sustainability Annual Report 2024/25 and Environmental Sustainability Policy 2025/26 [BG25/33]

The Board considered the Annual Sustainability Report and updated Environmental Sustainability Policy following endorsement by Strategic Performance Committee on 3 November. The Annual Sustainability Report highlighted key sustainability achievements within research activity and performance against key targets, including reductions in carbon emissions and improved energy efficiency across campus. The policy was an essential requirement for the ISO14001 certification and supported performance within league tables including THE Impact League. Areas requiring increased focus had been identified including recycling rates, business travel, sustainable procurement practices and biodiversity enhancement. Progress was benchmarked against targets set out in the Environmental Sustainability Policy, demonstrating alignment with the University's long-term goal of achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2040. Key policy priorities included deepening decarbonisation efforts through renewable energy and building efficiency projects and sustainability would be embedded in all academic programmes and the University would monitor and report against measurable targets. **The Board approved the report, noting that efforts to generate more recycling had been increased, and that AI was a significant energy consumer and DTT were incorporating its usage into the carbon footprint assessment of the provision.**

Strategic Risk Report [BG25/34]

The Board approved the updated Strategic Risk Report, following endorsement from Audit Committee on 17 November, noting that Audit Committee had discussed the report thoroughly, providing feedback which would be incorporated into future iterations of the report, and an assurance framework was being developed with input from the Chair of Audit Committee which would be considered at the February meeting of the Committee.

4 Chair's Reports

Academic Board: 21 October [BG25/35]

The Board noted that at its 21 October meeting the Academic Board had considered and endorsed many of the items on the agenda for this meeting, considered an update on PGR students which reported a significant improvement in the PGR survey with the 24th highest score nationally and was overall positive with strong growth in numbers and external funding, and approved the Students' Union Quality Review Action Plan.

Strategic Performance Committee: 3 November [BG25/36]

The Board noted that at its 3 November meeting Strategic Performance Committee had

considered and endorsed many of the items on the agenda for this meeting, considered a deep dive into the Powering an Inclusive Economy Strategic Ambition, welcomed a detailed approach to the University's oversight of partnerships, requested that a session for all Governors on Claude AI be included in the 2025/26 pre-Board visits schedule, and noted that work was underway to understand barriers to further study.

People Committee: 10 November [BG25/37]

The Board noted that at its 10 November meeting People Committee had considered and endorsed many of the items on the agenda for this meeting, discussed the University's approach to academic pension schemes in depth and received assurances on how it would be managed going forward, considered a report on the Leadership Development Programme and Retreat which had received strong positive feedback and high demand for its next cohorts, and had welcomed the presenting of reports by colleagues in non-senior leadership roles.

Finance and Resources Committee: 11 and 20 November [BG25/38 and Oral and Report]

The Board noted that at its 11 and 20 November meetings the Finance and Resources Committee had considered and endorsed updates on many of the items on the agenda for this meeting including the ARFS which had been thoroughly considered in both the meeting and an informal joint meeting with Audit Committee and the University's external Auditors, and considered the Value for Money report which incorporated the elements considered by Audit Committee as well as those previously considered by Finance and Resources Committee as separate reports.

Audit Committee: 17 November [BG25/39]

The Board noted that at its 17 November meeting the Committee had considered and endorsed updates on many of the items on the agenda for this meeting, approved the approach to the tender process for the external audit contract, requested that cyber security was given more prominence in the Strategic Risk Register to enhance visibility of the area of risk and additional information on controls provided, and approved Cyber Security in the Supply Chain as the scope for the non-allocated audit slot in the 2025/26 Internal Audit Plan.

Northumbria London Campus Board: 18 November [BG25/58]

The Board noted that at its 18 November meeting Northumbria University London Campus Board of Directors had approved the joint venture accounts, letter of representation and dividend payment to QAHE, noting that the payment to the University had increased and would be monitored throughout the year.

5 Constitutional Matters

Governor Terms of Office and Succession Planning [BG25/40]

Sophie Haagensen remained in the room but did not partake in any discussion regarding her own Term of Office.

The Board noted the Governors Terms of Office and Succession Planning, noting that Sophie Haagensen's term of office would end on 31 December 2025, Helen Thorne's final term of office would end in June 2026, and recruitment for three new Independent Governors had commenced in November. The Board thanked Sophie Haagensen for her contribution to the Board and its Committees during her term of office as an Independent Governor.

6 Year End Items

Annual Report and Financial Statements [BG25/58]

The Board approved the Annual Financial Return 2024/25 for submission to OfS

OfS Five-year Forecast and Commentary [BG25/46]

The Board approved the OfS Five-year Forecast and Commentary for submission to OfS

Modern Slavery Statement 2024/25 [BG25/47]

The Board considered the 2024/25 Statement on Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking following consideration by Finance and Resources Committee on 11 November. The University satisfied the financial threshold requirement and had prepared and published a statement each year since 2015/16. The highest priority categories for continued focus were Facilities and Estates, Travel, ICT, and

Laboratory equipment and chemicals. The University continued to work with colleagues to define and regularly review goals in Responsible Procurement including ethical supply chains. The University would continue to enhance its working relationship with NEUPC, including representation at their Procurement Strategy Group and Responsible Procurement Group. New Procurement Legislation introduced at the end of February 2025 included further Responsible Procurement requirements for any procurement with public funding. A Modern Slavery section was included in the online safeguarding training, which was mandatory for all staff and the University would continue to enhance its due diligence framework for the consideration of potential partnering arrangements, including research partners. **The Board approved the Modern Slavery Statement.**

Safeguarding and Prevent Duty Annual Report 2024/25 [BG25/48]

The Board considered the Safeguarding and Prevent Annual Report for 2024/25 following endorsement by Audit Committee on 17 November. The University remained compliant and exhibited due regard for the Prevent duty throughout the year. OfS had expanded the categories for Prevent referrals to reflect the full list used by Homeland Security. Safeguarding arrangements continued to operate effectively across all campuses, and no events had been cancelled in relation to external speakers. The report highlighted the work carried out to date on the implementation of the new OfS condition E6: Harassment and Sexual Misconduct. **The Board approved the Safeguarding and Prevent Annual Report 2023/24 including the specific statements required by OfS, noting that University met regularly with regional University and Council colleagues to discuss Prevent related issues.**

Annual Security Report 2024/25 [BG25/49]

The Board considered the Annual Security Report for 2024/25 following consideration by Audit Committee on 17 November. The report outlined measures taken to protect people, estates, data and other assets and security arrangements addressed risks from crime, fraud and all forms of physical and digital attacks. Assurances for broader security concepts, such as overall financial security, or the University's broader health and safety measures, were provided in separate specific reports, such as the Annual Report and Financial Statements or the Annual Health and Safety Report. Collaboration with local police and security services continued to be effective during 2024/25. 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 Board approved the Annual Security Report for 2024/25.**

Regulatory Compliance Annual Report 2024/25 [BG25/50]

The Board considered the Regulatory Compliance Annual Report for 2024/25 following approval by Audit Committee on 17 November. The report provided assurance on compliance with OfS ongoing conditions of registration, covered requirements of regulators and bodies with some quasi-regulatory functions covering significant elements of activity across the University. 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. The overall assessment was that the University remained compliant with the OfS conditions of registration however, there were five regulators or bodies with some known risks to compliance and management arrangements and processes that required some attention. Additional review and audit of those areas was in progress. **The Board noted the report, noting that the University was already compliant with the new UK Basic Compliance Assessment (BCA) thresholds introduced from September 2025.**

Annual Committee Reports 2024/25: Audit Committee [BG25/51]

The Board noted the Annual report of the Audit Committee following approval at the 17 November meeting of the Audit Committee.

Annual Committee Reports 2024/25: Finance and Resources Committee [BG25/52]

The Board noted the Annual report of the Finance Committee following approval at the 11 November meeting of the Finance Committee.

Annual Committee Reports 2024/25: People Committee [BG25/53]

The Board noted the Annual report of the People Committee following approval at the 10 November meeting of the People Committee.

Annual Committee Reports 2024/25: Strategic Performance Committee [BG25/51]

The Board noted the Annual report of the Strategic Performance Committee following approval at the 3 November meeting of the Strategic Performance Committee.

