

**STRATEGIC PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE**

**3 November 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 S Fancey (Chair), K Fawcett, Prof A Long, I McCrory, A Parker, J Thompson [from SPC25/09]  
 Apologies: Roberta Blackman-Woods, Dan Monnery  
 Observer: A Porter (Advance HE)  
 Secretary: G Bailes and B Lenney (Assistant Secretary)  
 In attendance: M Foalle [to SPC25/09], Prof G Howatson [SPC25/14] Prof T Lawson, G Russell [SPC25/11], Dr P Steadman [SPC25/13], T Urwin [to SPC25/09], A Welby [SPC25/12] Prof G Wynn

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

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| <b>1.</b> | <p><b><u>Declarations of Interest</u></b> [Oral Report]<br/>         Adam Parker declared in relation to item SPC25/12 that he had previously been employed by Sage.</p> <p><b><u>Vice-Chancellor's Horizon Scanning</u></b> [Oral Report]<br/>         The Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive provided an update on national, regional and local developments and their potential implications for Northumbria. The Post 16 Education and Skills White Paper had been published in October 2025 ahead of the Autumn Statement. The detail of the report was being worked through however it was noted that the Paper included confirmation of an increase to the domestic tuition fee cap in line with inflation and maintenance grants were to be introduced by end of this parliament, though this was to be funded by a levy on international fee income which most of sector had been critical of. The report also mentioned broader reforms including the introduction of V level vocational qualifications equivalent to one A level which would be studied alongside A levels and replace 900 existing technical qualifications. George Clarke had been appointed as the University's new Chancellor and would be presiding at the December Congregations. Five North-East universities would be joining with the Combined Authority to launch a Spin-out Inspire Fund focussed on transforming cutting edge research into high growth business in the region. 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. <b>The Committee noted the update and noted that there were concerns regarding the recent Government references to University specialisation, which had been highlighted by the sector at various points, due to the potential impact on social mobility and widening participation.</b></p> |
| <b>2.</b> | <p><b><u>Strategic Discussion Items</u></b></p> <p><b><u>University Strategy 2024-30 Deep Dive: Powering an Inclusive Economy</u></b> [SPC25/09]<br/>         The Committee considered the deep dive presentation on the "Powering an Inclusive Economy" Strategic Ambition. The University's Strategic Ambition aimed to ensure every on-campus undergraduate student would benefit from experiential learning as part of their studies, enhancing their post-university prospects by helping to build skills and social capital. The University's relative sector position for Graduate Outcomes had remained flat in quartile 2, with a marginal decline in sector rank from 50th to 51st position. 59% of undergraduate programmes were currently offering 60+ core credits of experiential learning, representing</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |

substantial progress toward embedding experiential learning as an essential curriculum element. The University had achieved 95.47% coverage of undergraduate students on 90.6% of programmes with at least 60 credits of core module embedded experiential learning, and had launched the Experiential Learning Hub in February 2025 to provide centralised guidance and resources for academic colleagues. The University had achieved first quartile position for skilled work at 26th rank, improving seven places, providing a robust foundation for strategic development and 70% of graduates remained in North East employment and 24% of regional highly skilled employment comprised the University's graduates. The percentage of students reporting they were 'career ready' had declined by one percentage point versus the previous year. The University had established a sector-leading position in responsible AI through being the second university in the UK to provide Claude for Education, and fourth globally. The Centre for Responsible Artificial Intelligence (NU-CRAI) had been launched in May 2025 with AI embedding planned in experiential learning. Key challenges included sustaining high performance in graduate outcomes in a declining labour market and increasing the proportion of graduates in further study where widening participation students faced cost challenges. The appointment of a new Dean of AI in Education would provide dedicated leadership to drive continuous evolution of the University's AI direction. **The Committee noted the report and welcomed the visual representation of skilled outcomes and acknowledged the need to consider relevant benchmark cohorts and barriers to further study, including pricing and course portfolio, noting that graduate outcomes data could fluctuate drastically year on year in subjects with small cohorts, and it was expected that experiential learning would support improvement in some of those areas. The Committee noted that students entering skilled employment may return for further study, though measuring this through longitudinal studies and data provided by HRMC was challenging, and work was underway to better understand the existing barriers to engaging in further study for the University's students. The Committee welcomed the inclusive approach to experiential learning and noted early positive feedback from students, staff, and external partners, including interest from NECA and some major employers.**

### 3. Performance Monitoring

#### Student Experience and Learning Outcomes – Q1 [SPC25/10]

The Committee considered the Quarterly Student Experience and Learning Outcomes Report for October 2025. Internal retention measures had shown two years of steady improvement and sector continuation data showed the University's position to be static year on year. The discrepancy between internal retention measures and sector continuation data included methodology changes and the inclusion of increased numbers of Pathway students in the data sets. **The Committee noted the report, noting that survey data indicated that c 50% of the student population were working more than 20 hours per week, though this was not considered a full representative measure as national data indicated the average was closer to 78% and interventions were in place at the beginning of the student journey to improve retention, though it would take time for the results to impact the metrics.**

#### Annual League Table Summary 2024/25 [SPC25/11]

The Committee noted that Northumbria continued to perform strongly across domestic league tables, maintaining one of its highest-ever positions in the Times Good University Guide. The University achieved its best result in the People & Planet metric, reflecting significant improvement in sustainability performance. Key areas for future enhancement were identified, including National Student Survey outcomes and reputation measures in international rankings. Short-term actions had been agreed to strengthen performance in upcoming QS reputation surveys, and the Strategic Planning and Performance team will focus on priority metrics to drive further progress over the next year. **The Committee noted the report, noting that the University was considering how best to approach league tables and where adjustments would have most impact.**

#### University Strategic Partnerships and Relationships [SPC25/12]

The Committee considered the report on current University strategic partnerships and relationships. The approach to evaluation and oversight of partnership opportunities was being reviewed with an aim to improve cross-institutional prioritisation, buy-in and coordination in relation to partnership opportunities and opportunities to collaborate with partners on specific initiatives. Strengthened leadership structures had been established through the Relationship Management Operational Group. Significant regional progress included NE Combined Authority collaboration and the UNEE launch, and growing business partnerships with key organisations were developing to support the University's Strategic Ambitions. **The Committee noted the report, welcomed the level of detail in the report noting that the Committee's oversight of Strategic Partnerships was relatively new and there had been development of the reporting over the past year, and noted that the work of the Partnerships team supported all areas**

**of the University and had been of significant contribution to the development of the Centre for Responsible AI.**

**Sustainability Annual Report 2024/25 and Environmental Sustainability Policy 2025/26** [SPC25/13]

The Committee considered the Annual Sustainability Report and updated Environmental Sustainability Policy for endorsement. 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. 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. **The Committee endorsed the report and policy for consideration by Board of Governors on 27 November.**

**The Status Quo: an Update on PGRs** [SPC25/14]

**The Committee noted an update on PGRs, noting that historically there was a higher success rate in science subjects due to a disproportionate number of funding opportunities available, though other subject areas had seen improvements, and there had been a significant positive culture shift to the importance of PGR students to the Strategy.**

**Annual Report of Strategic Performance Committee 2024/25** [SPC25/15]

The Committee noted and approved its finalised annual report for consideration by Board of Governors on 27 November 2025.

Beth Lenney  
Assistant Secretary to Strategic Performance Committee  
November 2025