

BOARD OF GOVERNORS' MEETING

5 October 2020 - via Microsoft Teams (including videolink)

CONFIRMED SUMMARY MINUTES

Contact Susan O'Donnell, susan.odonnell@northumbria.ac.uk, Secretary to the Board of Governors, with any queries about these Summary Minutes.

Present: Dr Roberta Blackman-Woods (Chair) Craig Apsey, James Bromiley, Jean Brown, Lorraine Brown, Alasdair Corfield, Dr Stuart Fancey [until BG20/07], Sophie Haagensen, Peter Judge, Emmanuel Kabengele [BG20/05 – BG20/08], Sally Pelham, Amy Rice-Thomson [absent BG20/05], Claudia Shaw, John Taylor, Helen Thorne, Professor Andrew Wathey, Dr Jeya Wilson, Simon Yellowley.

Apologies: Nick Pope

Secretary: Susan F O'Donnell, Richard Elliott (Assistant Secretary)

In attendance: Dr Simon Corbett [BG20/02], Adam Dunlop [absent minutes 20.009 – 20.029], Jane Embley [absent minutes 20.019 – 20.022], Professor Peter Francis, Professor Steven Kyffin, Professor Tom Lawson [BG20/07], Professor George Marston, Daniel Monnery [absent Student Recruitment Update and Covid-19 Scenario Planning Update – BG20/05], Simon Newitt, Professor Jon Reast, Jay Wilson [BG20/02], Lucy Winskell.

MAIN ITEMS DISCUSSED/DECIDED ON AT THE MEETING

Board and Committee Membership 2020/21 [BG20/01]

The Board considered recommendations of Nominations Committee covering forthcoming changes to Board membership during 2020/21 and the current composition of the Board in comparison to the Instrument and Articles. It was recommended that the membership of Audit Committee be increased to six members, to include the recruitment of a co-opted Audit Committee member to replace the skills/experience of the departing co-opted Committee member and the addition of the current Chair of Audit Committee as a co-opted member when his term of office expired in February 2021. It was also recommended that Employment and Finance Committee would benefit from the replacement of the estates and property skills and experience brought by a departing co-opted member; that given the value brought to Remuneration Committee by the skills and experience of co-opted members, the current co-opted member should be asked to serve a second term; but that in light of the revised membership of Strategic Performance Committee following recent Board appointments and the Committee's current level of membership, the current co-opted member should not be asked to serve a second term. The current term of office of the elected Professional Support Staff Governor, would end on 15 December 2020; given the significant practical difficulties in holding the required election at the planned time because of the ongoing restrictions of the Covid-19 pandemic, it was recommended that the election be postponed until late spring/early summer 2021 and the term of office of the current elected Professional Support Staff Governor be extended until the election process was complete. **The Board approved the recommendations of Nominations Committee.**

Board Effectiveness Review [Oral Report]

The Board of Governors received an update on preparations for the forthcoming Board Effectiveness Review.

Vice-Chancellor's Report [BG20/02]

The Vice Chancellor and Chief Executive provided an update on the current Covid-19 outbreak at Northumbria, and reassured Board that the University's focus was on the wellbeing of its students. Northumbria was working closely with Newcastle University, the City Council and the Director of Public Health, and Public Health England, to deliver a coordinated local response, and had reported the position to DfE and OfS. Alongside direct Covid issues, focus had been on recruiting students, and safely welcoming and teaching them when they arrived. Northumbria's ranking had improved in both the Guardian University League Table 2021 and the Times and Sunday Times Good University Guide. **The Board commended the focus on student safety, support and wellbeing during the Covid outbreak, and agreed that there would be value in re-mobilising the Covid-19 Delegated Sub Group, which would be addressed by Written Resolution. The Board also commended the extraordinary efforts of the IT team in responding to the cyber incident, and requested that proposals for recognising the extraordinary efforts of staff**

during the current challenges be brought to a future meeting.

Mid-Point Review of University Strategy 2018-23 [BG20/03]

The Board considered the outcomes of the review of the University Strategy discussed at Strategic Performance Committee and Board of Governors in June 2020 and endorsed by Strategic Performance Committee at its 21 September 2020 meeting. A number of revisions to Business Outcomes were recommended, taking into account prioritisation (streamlining the Strategy, maximising the chances of achieving it) and relevance (reflecting changes to the context in which the University working, especially Covid-19). Proposals would result in a net reduction of five Business Outcomes. **The Board endorsed the view of Strategic Performance Committee that the right organisational structures would be key to delivery and approved the proposed revisions to Business Outcomes.**

University Strategy 2018-23 Update and Annual Performance Report [BG20/04]

The Board considered an update on the performance of the University Strategy KPIs at the end of 2019/20 and other performance issues. Six KPIs had a RAG rating of green, with one rated amber and two red. For two KPIs no rating was possible at the point of the report, but the positive results of the Staff Engagement Survey had subsequently been considered by the Employment and Finance Committee, meaning that a further KPI was rated green. **The Board noted the update and commended the excellent outcome of the Staff Engagement Survey.**

Student Recruitment Update and Covid-19 Scenario Planning Update [Presentation]

The Board received a presentation on the student recruitment position for 2020/21, which was overall positive despite the extraordinary challenges of the English A-level results and the impact on Clearing alongside the existing challenges of Covid-19. **The Board noted the update, commended the work of the recruitment teams under very challenging circumstances and noted that the learning analytics system allowed close to “real time” monitoring of student engagement to enable rapid intervention where retention risks were apparent.**

Covid Corporate Financing Facility (CCFF) Application [BG20/05]

The Board discussed a proposal to apply to the Bank of England to participate in its Covid Corporate Financing Facility (“CCFF”). **The Board approved that an application should be made.**

NSS Outcome and Action Planning [BG20/06 and Presentation]

The Board considered the results of the 2020 NSS and the proposed action plans to address them. Northumbria’s overall student satisfaction score and rank against the Times Providers on overall satisfaction and student experience had decreased; however the rank for the Times GUG Teaching Quality measure had improved and the majority of the priority subjects identified in 2019/20 had shown improvement but further progress was still required. The proposed subjects for improvement work during 2020/21 were agreed. **The Board expressed disappointment with the overall score and rank but commended the rigour of the analysis in the paper and acknowledged the improvements made in some areas. It noted the comprehensive improvement actions implemented after the 2019 NSS would take some time to drive the required levels of improved satisfaction but that the focus was firmly on action now that plans were complete.**

REF Update [BG20/07]

The Board considered an update on REF2021 covering changes to the REF timetable and the progress made against the target for colleagues with Significant Responsibility for Research (SIGRES) and thus entered for REF 2021. The final number to be submitted exceeded the target and represented a more than threefold growth since the previous REF in 2014. The Impact Assessment Period now ended on 31 December 2020 instead of 31 July, the submission deadline was 31 March 2021, with results expected in April 2022. Focus was now on completing, reviewing and challenging the impact case studies required, some of which were being supported by external drafting expertise **The Board commended the result and noted the arrangements in place to support the completion of impact case studies at the required level of quality.**

Students’ Union President’s Report (BG20/08)

The Board considered the Students’ Union President’s Report. The Students’ Union was working to support students with Covid-related accommodation issues and support for students’ wellbeing was being prioritised and enhanced, including a mental and emotional health programme and a mental wellbeing workshop for black students. Freshers’ Week had gone well despite the national and local restrictions, and the vast majority of students complied with Covid guidelines. **The Board noted the President’s report and thanked the Students’ Union for its invaluable support during the current challenges.**

Health, Safety and Wellbeing Q4 Report [BG20/09]

The Board considered the Health, Safety and Wellbeing update for May to July 2020, including an update on the health, safety and wellbeing elements of the University's response to Covid-19 and the restart of teaching on campus. Health and safety compliance and effectiveness was in line with the University Health and Safety Policy and there were no concerns relating to fire safety management, accidents, incidents or near misses. **The Board noted the update and commended the work to get the campus Covid secure for the start of teaching.**

Monthly Finance Report Period 12 2019/20 [BG20/10]

The Board noted the report and that the position for 2019/20 was favourable to budget.

Strategic Risk Register Update [BG20/12]

The Board considered proposed revisions to the University's Strategic Risks following review by University Executive and the Audit Committee. It was recommended that a new risk was created, as previously agreed with the Board of Governors, that focused on the Covid-19 pandemic (SRR012) which was rated a Red 12 risk. **The Board approved the revisions to the Strategic Risk Register.**

Board of Governors Summary Minutes and Confidential Minutes, 29 June 2020 and Chair's Action - Northumbria Students' Union Code of Practice [BG20/13 – BG20/15]

The Board confirmed the Summary Minutes and Confidential Minutes of its Meeting on 29 June 2020, and of the Chair's Action- Northumbria Students' Union Code of Practice as accurate records.

Summary Action List and Matters Arising [BG20/16]

The Board noted the Summary Action List and Matters Arising.

Summary Minutes and Confidential Minutes of Meetings: Employment and Finance Committee 22 September 2020; Strategic Performance Committee 21 September 2020; Audit Committee 14 September 2020; Nominations Committee 11 August and 18 September 2020 [BG20/18 – BG20/22]

The Board noted the Summary Minutes and Confidential Minutes of the above meetings.

Board of Governors Annual Agenda Plan 2020/21 [BG20/23]

The Board noted the Annual Agenda Plan for the 2020/21 academic year; it would be necessary to hold an additional cycle of meetings for Audit Committee, Employment and Finance Committee and Board of Governors to approve the Annual Report and Financial Statements and any delayed year end returns to OfS.

Susan F O'Donnell
Secretary to the Board of Governors
November 2020