

BOARD OF GOVERNORS' MEETING

24 April 2023 in room MBC009, Coach Lane 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, Liv Bird, James Bromiley, Dr Laura Brown, Emma Collier, Helen Fairfoul, Dr Stuart Fancey, Sophie Haagensen, Katherine Fawcett, Peter Judge, Hassan Kajee, Professor Andy Long, Professor Libby Orme, Sally Pelham, Helen Thorne [to BG22/93].

Apologies: Craig Apsey, Professor James McLaughlin, Amy Rice-Thomson, Professor Jon Reast

Secretary: Georgina Bailes, Richard Elliott (Assistant Secretary).

In attendance: Professor Louise Bracken, Simon Corbett, Christine de Lille [BG22/83], Jane Embley [to BG22/90], Professor Tom Lawson, Professor George Marston, Dan Monnery, Simon Newitt, Professor Graham Wynn.

MAIN ITEMS DISCUSSED/DECIDED ON AT THE MEETING

Vice-Chancellor's Report [BG22/82]

The Board of Governors considered an update on international, national, regional and local sector and policy developments and their implications for Northumbria. The devolution deal for the North East Mayoral Combined Authority represented a significant opportunity for the region, and following the recent budget, local discussions on potential applications of the Shared Prosperity Fund were in progress. The Lifelong Learning Entitlement would be introduced from 2025 and for degree level in 2027, and a cap on foundation years fees for non-STEM subjects was still anticipated with its impact on the University being modelled. The recent UCU re-ballot for industrial action had resulted in a majority in favour with turnout over the required threshold – action was thought likely to be a marking and assessment boycott, and appropriate mitigations were being put in place to ensure that students would be able to graduate. Engagement of staff and students in the programme of development events for the new Strategy had been very positive to date. **The Board noted the report.**

Amsterdam Update [BG22/83]

The Board of Governors considered a recommendation to withdraw from Amsterdam Campus that had been endorsed by Employment and Finance Committee at its 3 April meeting: the original drivers for the project had not materialised and there was now little likelihood of achieving the original business case targets. The potential to continue the joint degree and develop joint research work would be explored with AUAS. **The Board emphasised that supporting the positive experience of the remaining Amsterdam students would be a priority, and that good communications would be vital. The Board approved the recommendation to withdraw from Amsterdam Campus, with a final intake in September 2023.**

The Centre for Health and Social Equity: Next Steps [BG22/84 and Presentation]

The Board of Governors considered progress on the Business Case for the Centre for Health and Social Equity (CHASE) Programme following approval by Employment and Finance Committee on 3 April 2023 of the release of funds (£20m) to enable the next stage of the programme. The majority of the work approved by Employment and Finance Committee (the Lovaine demolition and the Energy Centre construction) was necessary for the development of the CHASE programme but was required regardless of CHASE. The full business case would be presented for Board approval in due course in the context of the full Estates Masterplan and Finance Strategy. **The Board noted that there was confidence that the anticipated additional student numbers could be generated, that specific governance arrangements including appropriate gateways were in place for the programme, with a construction director appointed and a programme director recruited, and that Employment and Finance Committee would have oversight of the appointment of contractors.**

Student Recruitment 2022/23, 2023/24 and 2024/25 [BG22/85 and Presentation]

The Board noted the position on student recruitment for 2022/23, 2023/24 and 2024/25.

Students' Union Report [BG22/86]

The Board of Governors considered the report of the Students' Union Sabbatical Team. Nerius Shah (currently VP Activities) had been elected President for 2023/24, and Liv Bird had been re-elected as VP Education. **The Board noted the report.**

Students' Union Governance Review [BG22/87]

The Board of Governors considered proposed changes to the Memorandum and Articles of Northumbria Students' Union. A recent issue had highlighted some weaknesses in the governance arrangements of the Union to manage the employment rights and processes of Sabbaticals in a way that would be fair to those concerned while allowing the Union to effectively handle such grievances and disciplinary processes. The Union had now reviewed and amended its governing document and bye-laws to establish more robust governance around the employment status of the Sabbatical Officers; the approach would enable continuity of student representation on the Board and its Committees regardless of changes to the Sabbatical team. **The Board approved the proposed changes to the Memorandum and Articles of Northumbria Students' Union.**

Monthly Finance Report Period 8 2022/23 [BG22/88]

The Board of Governors considered the University's financial position and performance at Period 8 (31 March 2023). **The Board noted the report and that the position for 2022/23 was favourable to budget.**

University Strategy 2018-24: Update and Performance Report [BG22/89]

The Board of Governors considered the performance of the University Strategy as at period 7 (28 February 2023). Performance for KPIs was six at green, two at amber and three at red. **The Board noted the report.**

Pay Gap Report 2022 [BG22/90]

The Board of Governors considered the Pay Gap Report for 2022 following consideration by Employment and Finance Committee on 3 April 2023. 2022 gender pay gap information had been published by 30 March 2023 as required – ethnicity and disability pay gap information had also been included. For 2022, the overall mean and median gender pay gaps were 11.4% and 15.2%, a reduction of 5% and 7.5% over a five year period (2017-2022), and the lowest figures reported to date; the mean and median pay gaps for both Northumbria and NUSL were below sector averages and the mean pay gap was also lower than the UK average for all industries. Ethnicity pay gaps had been retrospectively calculated for 2020 and 2021 to provide trend information. The focus for 2023 would be continued work on increasing representation of BAME employees across all grades and roles and work to increase in the number of staff declaring disability information. **The Board commended the scope of the report and noted that the job evaluation system ensured equal pay between roles.**

Mandatory Training Completion Update [Presentation]

The Board of Governors considered the latest completion rates for mandatory training following a discussion at its 27 February 2023 meeting. Completion rates had improved for all mandatory courses since December 2022, but some still remained too low and there was still significant variation in completion rates between different areas of the University. **The Board noted the update.**

Student Housing and Wellbeing [Oral Report]

The Board of Governors considered an update on citywide issues and work relating to student housing and wellbeing following a discussion at its 5 December meeting. There had been a major increase recently in demand for financial and mental health wellbeing support services, largely driven by the current cost of living crisis. pressure on the city's student housing position had increased due to greater overall numbers of students coming to Newcastle, an increase in international students accompanied by their families including children and a reduction in supply as some landlords withdrew their properties for use as Airbnb and similar. Successful initiatives elsewhere in the country (such as Manchester) would be adapted and implemented locally, and joint working would be extended to include Durham and Sunderland given the number of commuter students regionally. **The Board noted the report and that while there were also issues around quality and well as quantity of housing, the University's own accommodation was generally in reasonable condition.**

Annual Quality and Standards Report [BG22/93]

The Board of Governors considered the Annual Quality and Standards Report (2021/22) following consideration by Strategic Performance Committee on 13 April 2023 of the impacts of the changed

Assessment Regulations for Northumbria Awards on degree outcomes (section 5.1.3), and the annual Student Appeals and Complaints report (Annex A). The issue relating to the impacts of the changed Assessment Regulations for Northumbria Taught Awards (ARTA) on degree outcomes had arisen from changes introduced in 2019/20 in response to OfS requirements to counter perceived grade inflation. OfS guidance had now changed to returning “good honours” rates to pre-pandemic levels, which Northumbria would achieve without the implementation of the full set of 2019/20 changes, and the re-adjusted ARTA should result in good honours levels in line with the pre-pandemic sector position. Student Appeals and Complaints were generally in line with expectations and the wider sector experience of an increase, with no large-scale group complaints received at Northumbria. work would be carried out with students to ensure that the appeals and complaints procedures were properly understood. **The Board noted the report.**

Anti Money Laundering, Terrorist Finance and Sanctions Policy [BG22/95]

The Board of Governors considered the updated Anti-Money Laundering, Terrorist Financing and Sanctions Policy and Procedure following endorsement by Audit Committee by Written Resolution AC22/57. The Money Laundering, Terrorist Financing and Transfer of Funds Regulations 2017 (MLR 2017) and the policy, control and procedural requirements these regulations place on the University were now reflected; the requirements were already embedded in working practices. **The Board approved the Anti-Money Laundering, Terrorist Financing and Sanctions Policy and Procedure.**

Chair’s Report: Academic Board: 15 March and 6 April 2023 [BG22/96]

The Board noted that at its 15 March and 6 April 2023 meeting the Board had approved the changes to ARTA noted at BG22/93 above and considered revisions to the Student IP Policy and the Handbook of Student Regulations – the Student IP Policy would be submitted to Employment and Finance Committee for approval.

Chair’s Report: Employment and Finance Committee: 3 April 2023 [BG22/97]

The Board noted that at its at its 3 April 2023 meeting the Committee had considered the Pay Gap Report (see BG22/90 above) and considered the challenges arising from the ongoing 2020 valuation of the Teachers Pension Fund and their potential impacts on Northumbria. It had approved feasibility work on options for financing the University’s investment requirements, the funding of the initial phase of CHASE (see BG22/84 above) and the purchase of Durant Hall. It had endorsed the recommendation to withdraw from Amsterdam (see BG22/83 above).

Strategic Performance Committee: 13 April 2023* [BG22/98]

The Board noted the report of the Chair of Strategic Performance Committee.

Appointment of Independent Governors [BG22/102]

The Board of Governors approved the appointment of Mark Larson and Ian Wilkin as Independent Governors, and of Adam Parker as a Co-opted Member of Strategic Performance Committee, and approved an addition to Governance Regulations to build in a one-year review period for Co-opted Committee Members.

Chair of Strategic Performance Committee [BG22/103]

The Board of Governors approved the appointment of Dr Stuart Fancey as Chair of Strategic Performance Committee, and approved the extension of Amy Rice-Thomson’s final term of office to 26 June 2023.

Georgina Bailes
Secretary to the Board of Governors
May 2023