

STRATEGIC PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE

13 June 2022 in room 209, Sutherland Building, City Campus West and via Microsoft Teams
(including videolink)

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: C Apsey (Chair), E Collier, K Fawcett, Professor T Lawson, H Thorne, S Yellowley.
Apologies: Dr R Blackman-Woods, S Haagenen, A Sjoberg.
Secretary: G Bailes, R Elliott (Assistant Secretary).
In attendance: Professor L Bracken [REF2021 Outcome and Research Strategy Delivery Plan], A Dunlop, D Monnery, S Newitt, E Pritchard [SPC21/40], Dr P Steadman [SPC21/40], Professor G Wynn [Education Strategy Delivery Plan, SPC 21/38 and SPC 21/39].

MAIN ITEMS DISCUSSED/DECIDED ON AT THE MEETING

1. **Introduction**
Vice-Chancellor's Horizon Scanning [Oral Report]
The Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive presented on sector wide matters and the implications of these for the University. John Blake, the new OfS Director for Fair Access and Participation, had recently visited the University and acknowledged Northumbria's delivery of social mobility. The University's response to the lifelong loan entitlement consultation had been submitted, stating that the University was opposed to any reduction in foundation year fees. The Freedom of Speech Bill was included in the recent Queen's speech; the clause limiting academic freedom to areas of personal expertise had been removed. UKRI's recent funding settlement represented a significant increase – although details of future QR funding were not yet available, Northumbria's REF results pointed to additional funding being allocated. A recent speech by the Minister of State for Universities had focused on student mental wellbeing, and had also pointed to no overall cap on student numbers and continuing support to the concept of foundation years but without any reference to funding. **The Committee noted the update.**
2. **Strategic Discussion Items**
REF 2021 Outcome [Presentation]
The Committee considered the implications of the University's extremely positive REF 2021 results. Northumbria was ranked 23rd (up 27 places) for research power, 28th (up 23 places) for QR power and 33rd (up 21 places) for 4* FTE; 7 of 13 Units of Assessment were in the top 10 for research power, with 10 in the top 20 and all in the top 26, demonstrating major improvements in quality and impact as well as the volume of the submission. Internal forecasts of the results had been generally accurate, showing self-awareness of the quality and impact of research. The concept of a research-intensive modern university was proven by the combination of Northumbria's REF results and its widening participation profile, and the results were already beginning to generate a step change in the University's external reputation and also in internal perceptions and culture. Future plans for the further development and improvement of research would be informed by benchmarking with the Russell Group, and Units of Assessment had been segmented into three groups for improvement work, with attention focused on those which were outliers in quality terms. **The Committee commended the results and in particular Northumbria's unique status as a research intensive modern university. Analysis to project as far as possible the impact of the results on other KPIs would be undertaken.**

Education Strategy Delivery Plan [Presentation]
The Committee considered delivery planning for the Education Strategy; its aims and core principles had been endorsed at the 22 November 2021 meeting. The headline measures for the Strategy would be KPIs 4 (Graduate Outcomes), 5 (Student Satisfaction) and 6 (Continuation, which would be supplemented by a more timely internal retention metric), supported by six Business Outcomes grouped around the themes of Quality, Pride and Success. A detailed delivery plan for each theme was in place, phased until 2024/25,

and was being embedded into departments via a series of joint roadshows also covering the Research Strategy. Each workstream was supported by a team of academic staff, professional services staff and students. Access and Participation planning, addressing OfS's new focuses, would be integrated into the Education Strategy. **The Committee endorsed the approach being taken to delivery planning, and noted that work on the TEF submission was also well advanced, with submission due early in 2023. Actions directly relating to improved student experience were being prioritised.**

Research Strategy Delivery Plan [Presentation]

The Committee considered delivery planning for the Research Strategy; its aims and core principles had also been endorsed at the 22 November 2021 meeting. The headline measures for the Strategy would be KPIs 7 (Research Quality) and 8 (Research and knowledge exchange activity funded externally), supported by six Business Outcomes grouped around the themes of Quality, Pride and Success. A single delivery plan covering all three themes was in place, phased until 2024/25, and being embedded into departments via the joint roadshows. A framework to drive the required improvements in the research environment had been established, and a clear set of next steps for delivery of the Strategy was in place. **The Committee endorsed the approach being taken to delivery planning, and noted that IT and change management support was in place.**

University Strategy 2018-24 Update and Performance Report [SPC21/37]

The Committee considered the performance of the University Strategy as at the end of Period 9 2021/22. Performance for KPIs was four at green, two at amber and five at red; 22 Business Outcomes were defined as 'on-track' or 'complete', 13 had some issues that were being managed and were 'off-track' and 9 had 'no current status' while they were under review. All Business Outcome delivery plans were being reviewed to ensure they remained fit for purpose for the final two years of the current Strategy. **The Committee noted the report.**

3. Performance Monitoring

Student Experience and Learning Outcomes – Q3 2021/22 [SPC21/38]

The Committee considered developments relating to Student Experience and Learning Outcomes since the March 2022 meeting. The proportion of UK domiciled Full-time First Degree Northumbria graduates with positive outcomes had increased from 73.8% for 2018/19 leavers to 78.2% for 2019/20 leavers. NSS 2022 had now closed and results would be received in early July; Northumbria's response rate was similar to the previous year. The response rate for the pilot Postgraduate survey was much higher than for the previous year's PTES. Overall Satisfaction in the 2021/22 institutional MEQ for semester two was down from semester one but considerably higher than for semester two 2020/21. Internal retention data showed that there has been a significant spike in withdrawals of level 4 and level 5 students in recent months compared to previous years, which reflected trends across the sector. **The Committee noted the report and that work was in progress to understand and address where possible the reasons for the increase in withdrawals. These were thought to include weaker support networks among students in the wake of the pandemic, and an increase in students accepting employment directly from mid-course placements. There was also evidence of reduced student confidence in their own choice of courses and interventions were in place to address this.**

Access and Participation Plan [SPC21/39]

The Committee considered the requirement to review and update Northumbria's Access and Participation plan in line with latest OfS guidance by the 31 July 2022. OfS guidance requested provider to focus on Accessibility, School Partnerships for Attainment, Successful Participation and Outcomes and to develop more flexible and diverse provision - Northumbria was well placed to address these issues. As noted above, the APP would be integrated with the Education Strategy. The revised Plan would require out of cycle approval from Board of Governors prior to submission. **The Committee noted the report.**

Sustainability Annual Report [SPC21/40]

The Committee considered the Sustainability Annual Report, which demonstrated activity in support of Northumbria's commitment to supporting the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and to achieving an 'enhanced reputation for sustainability' and was one tool in informing stakeholders of sustainability activity. Northumbria's ranking in the Times Higher Impact League table had fallen, primarily because the report had covered a subset of the sustainable development goals. The 2021/22 report would again cover all 17, and its production was aligned to the timetable for the league table. **The Committee noted the report and that evidence for the League Table needed to be published and capable of external review to be admissible.**

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| | <p><u>Student Recruitment 2022/23</u> [SPC21/41 and Presentation] The Committee received an update on student recruitment for 2022/23. The requirement for Clearing was at a similar level to 2021 so should be achievable; home PGT recruitment was impacted by the more buoyant employment market. Demand for international programmes was significant and applications were no longer being accepted. The awareness campaign for recruitment during 2022/23 was in progress and interest in open days was positive. The Committee noted the update and that work was in progress as part of the awareness campaign to address parent and teacher perceptions and promote Northumbria as a positive choice for applicants.</p> |
| 4. | <p><u>Constitutional/Other Business</u></p> <p><u>Evaluation of Committee Effectiveness 2021/22</u> [SPC21/45] The Committee considered its effectiveness during 2021/22; more formal evaluation of Committee effectiveness had been approved by Board of Governors in order to achieve full compliance with the 2020 CUC HE Code of Governance. Responses to all questions either agreed or strongly agreed that Strategic Performance Committee demonstrated the attribute in question; free text comments related to the Committee’s ongoing focus on strategic performance and implementation of the strategy, and noted that at times the use of presentations without prior circulation to Committee could inhibit full consideration of issues. The Committee noted the evaluation and emphasised its preference for presentations to be accompanied by brief covering reports summarising the content of the slides.</p> <p><u>Committee Terms of Reference and Membership 2022/23</u> [SPC21/46] The Committee endorsed its Terms of Reference for 2022/23 with item 2.1 amended to differentiate performance management of the University Strategy from performance management of staff, and item 4.3 amended to reflect that Committee meeting could be online or in person for submission to Board of Governors on 27 June 2022.</p> |

Richard Elliott
Assistant Secretary to Strategic Performance Committee
June 2022