

STRATEGIC PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE

22 November 2021 - 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), Dr R Blackman-Woods, S Haagenen, H Thorne, Professor A Wathey, S Yellowley.
 Apologies: A Sjoberg.
 Secretary: G Bailes, R Elliott (Assistant Secretary).
 In attendance: Professor L Bracken [Research Strategy], Professor T Lawson, Professor G Marston [SPC21/15], D Monnery, S Newitt, Professor G Wynn [NSS 2021 Results and Response - SPC21/19].

MAIN ITEMS DISCUSSED/DECIDED ON AT THE MEETING

- | | |
|-----------|--|
| 1. | <p><u>Introduction</u>
 <u>Vice-Chancellor’s Horizon Scanning</u> [Oral Report]
 The Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive presented on sector wide matters and the implications of these for the University. Key developments were generally grouped into the ongoing impacts of the Covid pandemic, which was in a relatively stable phase with 86% of over 9,000 students responding to surveys reporting double vaccination, and the Government’s HE reform programme. The new Secretary of State for Education was taking a more collaborative approach to the same policy agenda, emphasising in particular collaboration between HE and FE. The majority of key decisions, including over headline fee levels, were still awaited with further information expected by the end of November. There had been no mandate for industrial action at Northumbria or at Newcastle. It was proposed to adjust the timing of the next iteration of the University Strategy to reflect the time lost to Covid and to allow the new VC and other recently-arrived senior colleagues to contribute fully – the current Strategy period would be extended to autumn 2024, and consultation on the new Strategy would begin in spring 2023. This would also allow for the transition to a new Chair of this Committee. The review would be informed by the current work to prioritise Business Outcomes, and by other lessons from the current Strategy. A development framework and timetable would be reported to the next meeting. The Committee noted the update and endorsed the approach to the Strategy review.</p> |
| 2. | <p><u>Strategic Discussion Items</u>
 <u>University Strategy 2018-23 Update and Performance Report</u> [SPC21/14]
 The Committee considered the performance of the University Strategy as at the end of Period 3 2021/22. Performance for KPIs was four at green, two at amber and one at red, with four shown as no current status to reflect reviews being carried out by the new PVCs for Education and Research. 18 Business Outcomes were defined as ‘on-track’, 20 had some issues that were being managed and were ‘off-track’ and 10 had ‘no current status’ while they were under review. The Committee noted that the increase in International Postgraduate students represented a return to pre-Covid levels, with no indication of any issues for support and experience. Reports would be provided to future Committees on Research and KE Activity and post-pandemic TNE developments.</p> <p><u>Draft Research Strategy</u> [Presentation]
 The Committee considered the approach being taken to the development of a Research Strategy. It built on the significant increases in both quantity and quality of research reflected in the REF2021 submission. Challenges included increasing the proportion of research-active academics and the volume and success rate of bids, ensuring that support and infrastructure kept pace with research growth, and achieving the required levels of external recognition. Both the Research Strategy and the Education Strategy (see NSS 2021 Results and Response below) would be developed through the lenses of quality, pride and success and principles derived from those; the aim for Research would be to establish peaks of excellence based on a high overall level of achievement. Northumbria’s research would also make a significant contribution to the Regional Strategic Economic Plan. The Committee commended the approach being taken to</p> |

development of the Strategy, particularly the visualisations used to explain key themes. The close links to the Estates Strategy as well as to the Education Strategy were noted; investment requirements would be addressed in the upcoming planning round, but a sound critical mass of capacity and support was already in place; work was required to ensure that it was properly focused on the new Strategy. The final Strategy would be presented to Board of Governors on 1 March 2022.

Environmental Sustainability Policy [SPC21/15 and Presentation]

The Committee considered the annual review of the Environmental Sustainability Policy, which recognised the University Strategy's commitment to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals. Targets had been reviewed and aligned with the Carbon Management Strategy. **The Committee noted the strong links between the targets and the intended research peaks noted above, and noted that to some extent achievement of targets in 2020/21 may have been skewed by pandemic restrictions and would require review in the context of a more normal year. Work to address scope 3 emissions was being built into procurement practice.**

QA/London Developments [Oral Report]

The Committee considered recent strategic discussions with QA's new leadership team. There were potential opportunities for expanding the scope of the partnership that would be brought to a future Committee meeting as required. **The Committee noted that securing the right commercial terms would be key.**

3. **Performance Monitoring**

NSS 2021 Results and Response [Presentation]

The Committee considered the development of a new Education Strategy, which would drive the recovery of the University's NSS ranking. This would be achieved by improvements such as halving non-continuation and enhancing graduate outcomes, both key TEF metrics. The Strategy would aim to position Northumbria's education in the top quartile of universities in the UK, with a reputation for teaching quality, academic excellence and a rewarding and fulfilling student experience, through developing and embedding a distinctive Northumbria vision of Research-Enriched Education in which education complements, enhances and benefits from research and knowledge exchange. An holistic view of the student experience would be developed through the same lenses of quality, pride and success that underpinned the Research Strategy. The Strategy was planned to achieve its immediate objectives by the end of calendar year 2024. **The Committee commended the holistic approach and noted that close engagement from Departmental leadership teams was essential. The introduction of the module evaluation questionnaire and more robust performance management of teaching delivery would require consultation with staff and Trade Unions.**

Student Experience and Learning Outcomes – Q1 2021/22 [SPC21/17]

The Committee considered developments relating to Student Experience and Learning Outcomes since the September 2021 meeting. The Students' Union reported a very positive Freshers Week with high levels of student engagement, teaching and learning had returned to primarily on-campus provision, phase 1 of the new Continuous Programme Performance Review process covering all undergraduate programmes had launched on 6 October 2021 and a series of Departmental roadshows was in progress. **The Committee noted the report.**

Annual League Tables Summary [SPC21/18]

The Committee considered an overview of Northumbria's performance and ranking in each of the main UK and International League Tables published in 2021. UK rankings were generally impacted by the NSS results, while International rankings were affected by a fall in citations; it was expected that International rankings in particular would benefit from the results of REF2021. **The Committee noted the report and requested further information around the citations issue given the generally increased level of research activity.**

Proceed Metric [SPC21/19]

The Committee considered the new Proceed measure which projected the likelihood of new students progressing through their course and then finding professional level employment or embarking on further study in the year after they graduate. Northumbria had a Proceed score of 61.7% calculated using the HESA Completion projection for new starters in 2018/19 (80.7%) and the percentage of graduates in the 2017/18 Graduate Outcomes who were in professional employment or further study (76.5%). This ranked Northumbria 61st out of the 131 HE providers who had been included in the first publication. Further

consultation on the final form of the metric was expected in the near future. **The Committee noted the report.**

Student Recruitment 2021/22 and 2022/23 [SPC21/20 and Presentation]

The Committee received an update on student recruitment for semesters 1 and 2 2021/22 and plans for 2022/23. Work was in progress to accelerate applications for 2022/23, which were as usual at this point in the cycle behind the sector and competitors; this was likely to be a result of the early deadline for medicine-related programmes, but would be kept under close scrutiny. On campus open days and in person schools visits were differentiating Northumbria. **The Committee noted the update and noted that applications in general were being submitted later each year. It was not clear whether the recent NSS was having an impact; investments to secure the required cohorts were already taking place and recruitment would be closely monitored and actively managed.**

Richard Elliott
Assistant Secretary to Strategic Performance Committee
November 2021