

## BOARD OF GOVERNORS' MEETING

27 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](mailto:georgina.bailes@northumbria.ac.uk), Secretary to the Board of Governors, with any queries about these Summary Minutes.

Present: Dr Roberta Blackman-Woods (Chair), Craig Apsey, Emma Collier, Helen Fairfoul, Dr Stuart Fancey, Katherine Fawcett, Sophie Haagensen, Peter Judge, Professor Tom Lawson, Libby Orme, Sally Pelham, Amy Rice-Thomson, John Taylor, Helen Thorne, Simon Yellowley.

Apologies: James Bromiley, Ava Sjoberg, Adam Dunlop.

Observer: Liv Bird

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

In attendance: Professor Louise Bracken, Jane Embley, Professor Steven Kyffin, Professor George Marston, Daniel Monnery [absent BG21/117], Simon Newitt, Professor Jon Reast, Lucy Winskell, Professor Graham Wynn.

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

#### Introduction [Oral Report]

The Chair welcomed Liv Bird, VP Education of the Students' Union, to the meeting as an observer; she would take up her role as Student Governor on 4 July. The Chair noted that this was Lucy Winskell's final Board meeting before taking up her new role; the Board thanked her for her exceptional contribution to the work of the University. The Board also extended its thanks to Professor Tom Lawson for his leadership of the University during the interim period between permanent Vice-Chancellors.

#### Vice-Chancellor's Report [BG21/113]

The Board of Governors considered an update on international, national, regional and local sector and policy developments and their implications for Northumbria. The external environment was currently characterised by uncertainty, with the outcome of the government consultations on HE reform and confirmation of (or otherwise) of the UK's participation in the Horizon Europe research funding schemes awaited, in the context of wider financial and geopolitical instability. 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 (although perceived "low quality" courses could be impacted) and continuing support to the concept of foundation years but without any reference to funding. The impacts of the REF and Graduate Outcomes results were beginning to be reflected in league tables. **The Board noted the report and that an updated Access and Participation Plan was due to be submitted to OfS by 31 July.**

#### REF2021 Outcomes [BG21/114]

The Board of Governors considered the implications of the University's extremely positive REF 2021 results; Northumbria was ranked 23<sup>rd</sup> (up 27 places) for research power, 28<sup>th</sup> (up 23 places) for QR power and 33<sup>rd</sup> (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. These rankings demonstrated major improvements in quality and impact as well as the volume of the submission and 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. Improvement work was focused on those Units of Assessment which were outliers in quality terms. **The Board commended the results and noted that it would be valuable to engender the same levels of enthusiasm and shared sense of purpose for other priorities such as improving the student experience. The lessons and benefits from the REF process were embedded in the Education Strategy and the research culture would be further strengthened by the outcomes of the EDI policy and the Race Equality Charter work.**

### **Planning and Budget 2022/23** [BG21/115]

The Board of Governors considered the plan and budget for 2022/23 following endorsement by Employment and Finance Committee on 6 June 2022. The focus of the planning round had been to ensure that the ability to invest was protected; and that headroom was maintained in order to mitigate the risks both in 2022/23 and beyond; the budget and plan for 2022/23 provided a sound financial basis for continued investment, with continued but realistic growth in income alongside strong management of the cost base. **The Board approved the plan and budget for 2022/23.**

### **Education Strategy Delivery Plan** [BG21/116]

The Board of Governors considered delivery planning for the Education Strategy; its aims and core principles focused on research-enriched education had been endorsed at the 29 November 2021 meeting. 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 lenses of Quality, Pride and Success. The basket of metrics would also contribute to the impending TEF submission. A detailed delivery plan for each theme was in place, developed in partnership with students and phased until 2024/25. Access and Participation planning, addressing OfS's new focuses, would be integrated into the Education Strategy. **The Board commended the comprehensive nature the delivery plan and the clarity of its phasing and timing, and suggested that supplementing the plan with some narrative setting out how developments such as a more social campus would look and feel to students would strengthen the approach.**

### **Research and Knowledge Exchange Strategy Delivery Plan** [BG21/117]

The Board of Governors considered delivery planning for the Research and Knowledge Exchange Strategy; its aims and core principles had also been endorsed at the 29 November 2021 meeting, and delivery planning closely mirrored the approach of the Education Strategy. 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 Quality, Pride and Success. A delivery plan covering all three themes in ten workstreams was in place, phased until 2024/25, and 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 and development of Northumbria's ambitions for the next REF was in place. **The Board commended the delivery plan and the development of an overall academic culture embracing both teaching and research.**

### **Race Equality** [BG21/118]

The Board of Governors considered the 2022 Race Equality Update, which would be circulated to all staff and students. It summarised the outputs of a self-assessment to understand more about racial inequalities and the consequences of any racism within the University's communities and identified a cohort of senior colleagues who were responsible for facilitating progress across a range of areas to support a whole-institution approach to advancing race equality. **The Board commended the clarity, honesty and self-awareness of the update, and noted that the intended application timeline for a REC bronze award reflected the anticipated impact of interventions, and that the application was just one output of those interventions.**

### **University Strategy 2018 – 2024 Performance Report** [BG21/119]

The Board considered the University Strategy Performance report as at period 10 2021/22 (31 May 2022). RAG ratings for KPIs 3ii, 4, 7 and 8 had all been updated to green since the last report to Board on 25 April and the forecast year-end position was five KPIs at green, two at amber and three at red. **The Board noted the report.**

### **Appointment of Academic Staff Governor** [BG21/120]

The Board considered progress and developments in the appointment of the Academic Staff Governor. Interest in the pilot application-based process had been strong, with a diverse range of staff attending briefing sessions. Issues had been raised by Trade Unions about the change in process from election to application and specifically about the representative nature of the Staff Governor role, and the Chair of the Board had taken Chair's action on 9 June to pause the appointment process to allow Nominations Committee to consider the issues raised and recommend to the Board how to proceed. The Staff Governor Role Description and Election Regulations had been amended to resolve any confusion over language and now referred to Staff Governors bringing a staff voice, insight and perspective to the Board of Governors discussion, debate and decisions. Further sector benchmarking had indicated that a number of institutions had moved from an election-based approach to applications, and that many of these had experienced an increase in staff interested in the opportunity as well as increased diversity of those putting themselves forward, and Nominations Committee had recommended that the process be resumed with the timetable for the application process delayed to acknowledge the summer holiday period. **The Board noted the report,**

emphasised that the presence of both staff and student governors was key to the effective functioning of the Board and its Committees, approved the adjustments to the wording of the Staff Governor Role Description and the Election Regulations and approved the resumption of the pilot application-based process with interviews to be held in September 2022.

**Governor Recruitment Update** [Oral Report]

The Board noted that the process had attracted a diverse range of strong applicants, and that a set of strong appointments was expected.

**Student Recruitment 2022/23** [BG21/121 and Presentation]

The Board noted the position on student recruitment for 2022/23.

**Students' Union Report** [BG21/122]

The Board of Governors considered the Students' Union Report. The Varsity sports events had been extremely successful, and the Sports Ball had been very well attended – the Students' Union extended its thanks to the staff of the Sports department for their support. The Union had worked with London Campus management to tailor information and support packages for postgraduate students there, and planning was now in progress for Wellbeing provisions during Freshers' Week. **The Board of Governors noted the report and commended the work of the remaining Sabbatical Officers under such difficult circumstances.**

**Monthly Finance Report Period 10 2021/22** [BG21/123]

The Board of Governors considered the University's financial position and performance at Period 10 (31 May 2022). **The Board noted the report and that the position for 2021/22 was favourable to budget.**

**Revised Equality Diversity and Inclusion Policy** [BG21/124]

The Board of Governors considered the revised Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy following endorsement by Employment and Finance Committee on 6 June 2022. The previous Equality and Diversity Policy had been updated as the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy with outdated concepts within the previous policy removed and a focus on inclusion added which was reflective of changes in the wider EDI landscape. The revised Policy clearly set out the University's position, obligations and expectations in relation to EDI including the commitment to being a fair and inclusive employer. **The Board commended the identification of senior staff leads for key EDI strands on the University's website and approved the revised Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy.**

**Interim Equality Diversity and Inclusion Report 2021** [BG21/125]

**The Board of Governors approved the Interim 2021 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Report following endorsement by Employment and Finance Committee on 6 June 2022.**

**Student Protection Plan – Annual Review** [BG21/126]

The Board of Governors considered the Student Protection Plan - the latest OfS guidance had been referenced and the Plan would be kept under review in tandem with the implementation of the new Education Strategy to ensure that the students' interests continued to be protected. **The Board noted the report.**

**Apprenticeships: OFSTED Preparation** [BG21/127]

The Board of Governors considered progress made to ensure the apprenticeship portfolio is aligned to the OFSTED Education Inspection Framework. A recent walkthrough inspection by external consultants had been beneficial, with a largely positive debrief, Katherine Fawcett had been nominated as the lead Governor for Apprenticeships and a Board workshop was being organised for July. **The Board noted the report.**

**University Business Continuity Plan and Policy** [BG21/128]

The Board of Governors considered the Business Continuity Plan and Policy following endorsement by Audit Committee on 23 May 2022. Each Faculty, Service, Amsterdam and London campuses and the Northumbria University Nursery would produce a Local Business Continuity Plan (LBCP); the University Business Continuity plan had now been drafted and would be reviewed in November 2022 after development of the LBCPs. **The Board approved the Business Continuity Plan and Policy.**

**Scheme of Delegated Authority** [BG21/129]

The Board of Governors considered the updated Scheme of Delegated Authority (SoDA) following endorsement by Audit Committee on 23 May 2022. The SoDA was the final stage of the suite of updated governance documents and it summarised how the authority of the Board of Governors was delegated to its Committees and to individual officers. It would be effective from 1 August 2022 and would be maintained

as a live document, with summarised changes reported annually to Audit Committee. **The Board commended the improved structure and clarity, and approved the updated Scheme of Delegated Authority to take effect from 1 August 2022.**

**Health, Safety and Wellbeing Report Q3 2021/22** [BG21/130]

The Board of Governors considered the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Report February – April 2022, which had already been considered by Employment and Finance Committee and Audit Committee. **The Board noted the report.**

**Treasury Management: Bank Mandates** [BG21/131]

The Board of Governors approved revised banking mandate arrangements for Barclays Bank plc, The Bank of Scotland, Lloyds, Svenska Handelsbank, HSBC, Nationwide, Santander UK plc and ABN AMRO following a change in key personnel within the Finance service.

**Chair’s Report - Audit Committee: 23 May 2022** [BG21/132]

The Board noted the report of the Chair of Audit Committee.

**Chair’s Report - Employment and Finance Committee: 20 May 2022 and 6 June 2022** [BG21/133]

The Board noted that at its 20 May and 6 June 2022 meetings the Committee had considered the plan and budget for 2022/23, endorsed the revised EDI Policy and Interim EDI Report for 2021 for consideration by Board and approved the submission of a capital funding bid to the Office for Students to support the development of the Centre for Health and Social Equity (CHaSE).

**Chair’s Report - Strategic Performance Committee: 13 June 2022** [BG21/134]

The Board noted that at its 13 June 2022 meeting the Committee had endorsed the REF Outcomes report, the Education Strategy Delivery Plan and the Research and Knowledge Exchange Delivery Plan, considered the revised OfS requirements for the Access and Participation, of which an updated version would be submitted by July 31 and received the Sustainability Annual Report.

**Chair’s Report - Academic Board: 23 June 2022** [Oral Report]

The Board noted that at its 23 June meeting, Academic Board had approved changes to regulations to address issues with the consistency of conditions for access to module resits and approved some adjustments to the Committee structure supporting Academic Board’s work.

**Annual Evaluation of Board and Committee Effectiveness** [BG21/135]

The Board of Governors considered the outcomes the 2021/22 evaluations of Board and Committee effectiveness. The majority of survey responses for the Board and all Committees were in the “strongly agree” or “agree” bands, with reasonable response rates, and useful improvement points were raised in the free text comments. **The Board noted the report and proposed improvements to the process for 2022/23 and requested that for 2022/23 those recording less positive responses be more strongly encouraged to explain why in the free text comments. The Board noted that it was content that the outcome of the reviews provided the Board with the assurance that the business of the Committees was being enacted effectively on behalf of the Board.**

**Committee Membership and Terms of Reference 2022/23** [BG21/136]

The Board of Governors noted that for 2022/23 Emma Collier would continue to sit on Strategic Performance Committee and Liv Bird would join Employment and Finance Committee, and approved the Committee Terms of Reference for 2022/23.

Georgina Bailes  
Secretary to the Board of Governors  
July 2022