



**EMPLOYMENT AND FINANCE COMMITTEE**

6 June 2022 - 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: H Fairfoul (Chair), C Apsey, Dr R Blackman-Woods, Professor T Lawson, D Pearson  
 Apologies: Dr S Fancey  
 Observers: L Orme, S Pelham [from EF21/94], Professor A Long  
 Secretary: G Bailes, R Elliott (Assistant Secretary)  
 In attendance: Professor L Bracken [REF2021 Outcomes], A Dunlop, J Embley, D Monnery, S Newitt, Professor J Reast [EF21/97 - Amsterdam Campus Teaching Space], L Winskell [Amsterdam Campus Teaching Space]

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

1.	<p><b><u>Introduction</u></b>  <b><u>Vice-Chancellor’s Horizon Scanning</u></b> [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. <b>The Committee noted the update and that John Blake recognised the University’s role in widening participation and the particular access challenges faced in the North East, and was enthusiastic about Northumbria’s active contribution to social mobility.</b></p> <p><b><u>REF2021 Outcomes</u></b> [Presentation]          The Committee 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, 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. <b>The Committee commended the results and noted that research was becoming part of the thinking and culture at all levels of the institution, with a critical mass now in place and continuing to grow, and that staff would continue to be given the tailored support required to maintain and increase the momentum of research.</b></p>
2.	<p><b><u>People</u></b>  <b><u>Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Update and Future Plans</u></b> [EF21/87]          The Committee considered an update on the progress made since increasing the University’s investment in the EDI team in order to drive the institutional EDI agenda forward. The University had been able to take a wider view of EDI, beyond the focus of the charter marks and accreditations with a view to having a more strategic approach to EDI, improving the University’s EDI culture, and driving the EDI agenda forward in a coherent and impactful way. The four priority areas of focus were Gender, Race, Disability and LGBTQ+ Equality, each of which now had dedicated UE leads. <b>The Committee noted the report.</b></p>

**Revised Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy** [EF21/88]

The Committee considered the revised Policy prior to seeking the approval of the Board of Governors on 27 June 2022. It clearly set out the University's position, obligations and expectations in relation to EDI. It set out the commitment to EDI through a Policy Statement, and described the commitment to being a fair and inclusive employer, and identified the range of responsibilities that colleagues had in relation to EDI. **The Committee commended the Policy, particularly its clarity about responsibilities for EDI, suggested some minor improvements and endorsed the revised Policy for submission to Board of Governors on 27 June 2022.**

**Interim Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Report 2021** [EF21/89]

The Committee considered the Interim 2021 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Report prior to submission to Board of Governors on 27 June 2022. In future, EDI reports would present information in relation to academic years; this would enable EDI progress to be considered in a way that was consistently aligned with the University Strategy and institutional commitments to EDI. This interim report therefore covered the period 1st January to 31st July 2021. It provided a brief update on the priority areas of inclusion and demonstrated progress against actions previously committed to as well as colleague demographics, fulfilling the requirement to publish regular information under the Public Sector Equality Duty. **The Committee endorsed the Interim Report for submission to Board of Governors on 27 June 2022.**

**Unacceptable Behaviours Policy and Tool - Update** [EF21/90]

The Committee considered the number and nature of cases reported under the Unacceptable Behaviours Policy and the areas that would be addressed to enhance its effectiveness. Nearly half of the reports were anonymous and few contained the monitoring information required to provide an insight into potential Equality, Diversity and Inclusion issues, explore the concerns or identify any emerging trends. More work was required to increase awareness, particularly amongst students. **The Committee requested that updates be provided to future meetings.**

**Academic Staff at Northumbria - Update** [EF21/91]

The Committee considered the continued activity to transform the academic staff base to deliver the University Strategy 2018–2024. Requirements at each level of the academic career pathway had been defined and their relationship to promotion clarified, providing clear line of sight to professor level. **The Committee requested an analysis of the recent academic promotion round by EDI characteristics be provided to a future meeting.**

**Health, Safety and Wellbeing Report Q3 2021/22** [EF21/92]

The Committee considered the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Report February to April 2022. Long-term sickness absence rates were reducing following the introduction of dedicated HR support, and short-term sickness was dominated by coughs/colds/infections, which was likely to include Covid. mandatory training completion rates had fallen by 5% to an average of 90%. This was being addressed with University Executive. **The Committee noted the report.**

**National Pay Negotiations** [Oral Report]

The Committee considered an update on the current national pay negotiations. UCEA's final offer was 3% for most pay points and between 3% and 9% for lower-paid staff – a response from Trade Unions was awaited; the University's normal position was to follow UCEA advice on implementation. **The Committee noted the update and that the work to examine Northumbria's lower pay points could now proceed given the known likely national outcome.**

**Pensions Update** [Oral Report]

**The Committee noted an update on pensions issues.**

**Mercer Master Trust Annual Report** [EF21/93]

The Committee considered the Mercer Master Trust Annual Review 2021 and Governance Report. There did not appear to be any concerns over the stability or longevity of UCRSS, or over customer satisfaction relating to Aviva. **The Committee noted that the default contribution rate for UCRSS would be reviewed as part of a review of the overall pensions strategy later in 2022 and approved continued participation in the Scheme based on satisfactory performance.**

**3. Core Financial Performance and Planning**

**Finance Monthly Report: P9 2021/22** [EF21/94]

The Committee considered the University's financial position and performance at Period 9 (30 April 2022) with oral updates relating to Period 10 indicating a further strengthened position. Risks remained in relation to the more immediate financial impact of student withdrawals, which reflected sector trends, and longer-term macro-economic factors, but the University continued to maintain significant

headroom notwithstanding inflationary pressure. **The Committee noted the report.**

**Planning and Budget 2022/23** [EF21/95]

The Committee considered the plan and budget for 2022/23 prior to submission to the Board of Governors on 27 June 2022; the report closely reflected the proposals discussed in depth by the Committee at its 20 May 2022 meeting. The budget and plan proposed 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 Committee endorsed the plan and budget for 2022/23 for submission to the Board of Governors on 27 June 2022.**

**Student Recruitment 2022/23** [EF21/96 and presentation]

**The Committee noted an update on student recruitment for 2022/23.**

**4. Policy/Regulation/Projects**

**Degree Apprenticeship Subcontracting – Annual Review** [EF21/97]

The Committee considered existing sub-contracted services on apprenticeship programmes to fulfil ESFA's 2021/2022 Sub-Contracting Rules. The rationale for Northumbria's sub-contracting arrangements was in all cases to address gaps for specialist provision, which was within ESFA's standards and thresholds. **The Committee approved the continuation of sub-contracted delivery based on the rationale presented.**

**Amsterdam Campus Teaching Space** [Oral Report]

The Committee considered issues relating to teaching space at the Amsterdam campus. Following further discussions with AUAS, assurance had now been received that the University's requirements could be met, although formal confirmation including the cost was still awaited. **The Committee noted the report.**

**Planned Updates to Financial Regulations** [EF21/98]

The Committee considered the proposed approach to updating the University's Financial Regulations prior to formal approval in November 2022. The more significant changes would move the University to a position where there was presumed compliance regarding budget holder approval in advance of some elements of spend; mitigating controls in place were considered a proportionate response to the risks. **The Committee noted that the changes would be reviewed and reassessed if necessary after a period of operation.**

**Contracts and Legal Claims Update** [EF21/68] **CONFIDENTIAL AND LEGALLY PRIVILEGED**

*(NB: this item is Legally Privileged and included in Reserved Business Minutes)*

**OfS Capital Funding Bid – Centre for Health and Social Equity (CHaSE)** [EF21/100]

The Committee considered 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). The full cost of CHaSE was expected to be supported by other external funding sources in due course. The concept had significant support from partners in the City; it would accelerate planning for the major intended capital development in the next five years and would address other issues, so would be valuable regardless of the success of the bid. **The Committee noted that the CHaSE concept was well-developed at the headline level in terms of teaching, research and KE content and approved the submission of the bid; the outcome would be known in late summer or early autumn.**

**Committee Annual Evaluation 2021/22** [EF21/101]

The Committee considered the evaluation of its effectiveness for 2021/22. Responses to all survey questions either agreed or strongly agreed that Employment and Finance Committee demonstrated the attribute in question, and free text comments related to maintaining an appropriate balance between employment and finance issues at Committee meetings, and managing the scope of its very broad remit. **The Committee noted that the balance of both agenda and discussions had been appropriate over the past year, and that further use of subject-specific workshops could be considered to help address the scope of the Committee's responsibilities. Consideration could be given to holding meetings other than on Monday afternoons to help members with other commitments.**

**Committee Terms of Reference for 2022/23** [EF21/102]

**The Committee endorsed its Terms of Reference for 2022/23 for submission to Board of Governors on 27 June 2022.**

**Students' Union Financial Performance P9 2020/21\*** [EF21/103]

**The Committee noted the report.**

Richard Elliott  
Assistant Secretary to Employment and Finance Committee  
June 2022