

**STRATEGIC PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE**

**15 October 2019 - Meeting Room 209, Sutherland Building, City Campus**

**CONFIRMED SUMMARY MINUTES**

**Contact Susan O'Donnell, [susan.odonnell@northumbria.ac.uk](mailto:susan.odonnell@northumbria.ac.uk), Secretary to the Board of Governors, with any queries about these Summary Minutes.**

**Present:** Alison Allden (Chair), Graham Atkinson (remote), Tom Harrison, Emmanuel Kabengele, Chris Sayers, Helen Thorne (remote), Professor Andrew Wathey (Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive).

**Apologies:** Jean Brown, Simon Newitt, Claudia Shaw,

**Secretary:** Susan O'Donnell, Richard Elliott (Assistant Secretary)

**In attendance:** Craig Apsey (Observer), Adam Dunlop, Professor Peter Francis (SPC19/03), Professor George Marston (SPC19/02), Dan Monnery, Jenni Stergiou (SPC19/02).

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

**1. Strategic Discussion Items**

**University Strategy 2018-23 update and Performance Report [SPC19/01]**

The Committee considered a summary of current and projected performance against University Strategy KPIs and Business Outcomes, the current context of market and regulatory change and uncertainties and priority areas for action in 2019/20. Revised Business Outcome plans for those that were off track would be completed and signed off by the Executive by November 2019, with an expectation that all would be ontrack by the end of 2019/20. Priority areas for action in 2019/20 would be: culture, student satisfaction and experience, REF and finances. **The Committee noted that the Business Outcomes currently showing as red were all in the knowledge exchange area; related improvement plans needed to be realistic taking into account available skills and resources, acknowledging which product lines were most attractive to business partners. A report outlining remedial action should be submitted to the November 2019 Board of Governors meeting. The expected trajectory toward the KPI target should be reconsidered, with any revisions submitted to a future Committee meeting in advance of Board approval.**

**Research Performance Report [SPC19/02]**

The Committee considered the first iteration of a new biannual report which focused on KPI 7 (Research Quality) and the research income element of KPI 8 (Research and Knowledge Exchange activity funded externally). Given the recent REF presentation to the September 2019 Board, this report focused on Research Grant and Contract Income (RGCI). Northumbria's 2018/19 RGCI (including partner payments) exceeded both plan and target at present but bid success rates remained lower than the sector average. New awards in 2018/19 grew by over 50%, suggesting that planned RGCI in 2019/20 would be achieved, but there was a lag between success in bidding and income realisation. Most awards spanned two or three academic years hence several years of growth in successful applications were required to grow actual income in any one year. There would be a greater focus on larger, interdisciplinary projects which were better aligned with funders' known priorities; a suite of proposals would be maintained to respond to the often short turnaround times for such bids to be addressed. The current transformation programme and improved project mobilisation and delivery approaches would support the continued development of the research culture, with a new Grants and Contracts system also being introduced. **The Committee noted that the bidding aspects of the overall research culture were improving, with research-active staff having a better understanding of the importance of RGCI, but further improvement and focus were needed if the targeted growth was to be achieved. IT support for research culture developments should be a priority. The shift of focus to larger, interdisciplinary projects would require careful alignment and prioritisation of resources and capacity and cultural improvements were essential. The Committee welcomed the**

	introduction of this approach to research performance reporting.
2.	<p><b><u>Performance Monitoring</u></b></p> <p><b>Student Experience and Learning Outcomes – September 2019</b> [SPC19/03]  The Committee considered the 2019 National Student Survey (NSS) results and action planning, Postgraduate Research Experience Survey results and updates on Graduate Outcomes, Step Change, Northumbria University Professional Recognition Scheme (NUPRS), Peer Support and the Teaching Quality Enhancement Fund (TQEF). In the 2019 National Student Survey (NSS), Northumbria's Times provider rank position declined from 66<sup>th</sup> to 71<sup>st</sup> on Teaching Quality, 48<sup>th</sup> to 66<sup>th</sup> on Student Experience and 50<sup>th</sup> to 73<sup>rd</sup> on Overall Satisfaction. In response to this, institutional priority areas had been identified as Academic Support, The Teaching on my Course, Organisation and Management and Student Voice. In addition, we had identified priority subject areas Action plans were shaped by step change maps that were based on an honest appraisal of the current position and where we needed to improve; all heads of department had clear improvement objectives aligned to what they can realistically deliver, supported by a change toolkit. The profile of both NSS and PRES results showed that areas of good and less good performance follow the same pattern, with systemic issues around people, culture and leadership needing to be addressed in the relevant subject areas. <b>The Committee noted that academic leadership teams were being refreshed so that there was universal buy-in to the Strategy and related action plans. It was important to maintain an emphasis on what was working well and the range of positive feedback from students as well as addressing the negative issues that must be resolved. NSS affected all domestic league tables, with the latest results influencing the Guardian and Complete tables in Spring 2020. Improvements delivered through the renewed approach should impact the Times League Table in September 2020. The Committee welcomed the Critical Challenge Meetings underway and noted that the NSS 100 Day Action Plan would be circulated to all Board members.</b></p> <p><b>League Table Outcomes 2018/19</b> [SPC19/04]  The Committee considered the UK and International League Table Rankings published throughout 2019 which, with the exception of the Times Good University Guide 2020 which was impacted by the disappointing NSS outcomes, generally showed improvements in ranking and a higher degree of stability than other providers. The fundamentals of student satisfaction, entry quality, research and employability were the focus of improvement activity, with league table ranking a by-product rather than a driver. <b>The Committee noted that the Times/Sunday Times league table tended to be the most influential domestic league table for international recruitment, with the QS rankings and star ratings also significant.</b></p> <p><b>Student Recruitment Update – 2019/20 Entry</b> [SPC19/05 and presentation]  The Committee considered the latest recruitment position for 2019/20 Semester 1 entry and, in particular, performance against KPI 1 (average UCAS entry points), the minimum volume threshold for UK/EU UG students and targets for UK/EU PGT and International (UG and PGT) students, as at 14 October 2019. The picture for Semester One 2019/20 was very positive, with indications for Semester Two also encouraging, particularly for international PGT recruitment. <b>The Committee noted the latest position and commended this year's excellent recruitment and conversion result. Given national concerns around the growth of Foundation Years and whether these were in the student interest, an evidence base of positive outcomes for foundation students, especially in a widening participation context, was required. The use of unconditional offers would cease in advance of any national position.</b></p>
3	<p><b><u>Constitutional/Other Business</u></b></p> <p><b>Committee Membership and Terms of Reference 2019/20</b> [SPC19/07]  The Committee proposed some minor amendments to its Terms of Reference.</p> <p><b>Strategic Risk Dashboard</b> [SPC19/10]  The Committee considered the Strategic Risk Register Dashboard and noted that the next full update of the Register will be at the annual review date in February 2020.</p>

Richard Elliott  
Assistant Secretary to Strategic Performance Committee  
November 2019