

NOTTINGHAM TRENT UNIVERSITY

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
BOARD OF GOVERNORS
HELD ON 28 SEPTEMBER 2021**

Present

N Goulden, Pro-Chancellor (Chair)	J Maier
A Brown	S V Murcott
D Dayal	C Naughton
S Denton	J Nelson
N Ebbs	Professor E W Peck
I Ellis	S Walker-Smith
Dr A Emuwa	C Wayman
S Fish	D Williams
L Holder	Dr D Wilson
G Love	O Woodley

In Attendance

Professor S Huttly, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic Development and Performance)
R C Jenkyn, Clerk to the Board of Governors
J A Clews, Governance Services Manager (Minute Secretary)

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Baroness D Warwick.

21.43 Welcomes and Farewells

The Pro-Chancellor welcomed members to this meeting of the Board of Governors, convened on campus for the first time since February 2020.

The Pro-Chancellor welcomed Doug Wilson to his first meeting of the Board. Doug had been appointed for an initial term of three years with effect from 1 September 2021 and would also join the Employment Policy Committee.

The Board noted that Juergen Maier was attending his last meeting prior to stepping down from the membership of the Board of Governors on 30 September 2021. The Board recorded its thanks to Juergen for his support and contributions to the University. The Vice-Chancellor noted that he had agreed to become an Honorary Professor at NTU and would continue to input to both economic development issues and NTU's Department of Engineering.

The Pro-Chancellor noted that Sir David Nicholson had stepped down from the membership of the Board of Governors on 16 September 2021 due to business commitments. The Board recorded thanks to Sir David for his contributions to the University and the Board during his tenure and wished him well for the future. The Vice-Chancellor noted that Sir David had offered to continue to support the University in relation to health-related matters.

21.44 Declarations of Conflicts of Interest Relating to Items on the Agenda

Members present were asked to declare any potential conflicts of interest they held in the agenda items to be considered. No conflicts of interests were declared.

21.45 Minutes

(a) Minutes of the Previous Meetings

Minutes of the meeting of the Board of Governors held on 6 July 2021 (Document A) were approved as a true record.

(b) Matters Arising

Members received a report (Document B) in relation to matters arising from the previous meetings. All action points had been progressed and updates were provided as appropriate under the relevant agenda item.

21.46 Report from the Pro-Chancellor

The Pro-Chancellor presented a report (Document C) on key issues, including the matters discussed at the private session held with Independent Members earlier in the day. The following matters were highlighted during discussion:

[Some of the detail of this minute has been withdrawn due to its confidential nature.]

- The role of Deputy Chair of the Academic Assurance and Regulation Committee had become vacant upon Sir David Nicholson's retirement from the Board. The Pro-Chancellor recommended, with the support of the Senior Independent Governor and the Chair of the Academic Assurance and Regulation Committee, that Jennie Nelson be appointed as Deputy Chair of the Academic Assurance and Regulation Committee with immediate effect. Jennie would step down from the membership of the Audit and Risk Management Committee;
- The proposal to refocus the Monday evening "golden thread" presentations to enable wider-ranging discussion on the Strategic Plan themes was endorsed by the Board. This would allow for greater time to review the area and the opportunities and challenges faced. The first such presentation, relating to Creating Opportunity, would be scheduled for March 2022;
- The annual governance effectiveness questionnaire seeking views on a range of governance related matters had been issued to all Governors over the summer. The Pro-Chancellor reported that there had been a good response rate and positive feedback received, particularly in relation to the performance of the University Executive and the new Committee structure. There had been a mixed view regarding participation and engagement at virtual meetings held by necessity during the pandemic. Whilst the Pro-Chancellor was keen for all meetings of the full Board of Governors to be held in person where possible following the relaxation of Covid restrictions, different approaches could be adopted for the Committee meetings through discussion between the Chairs and members;
- The Board had welcomed the revised approach to the school presentations which provided a more balanced focus on strengths, weaknesses, risks and challenges;

- The Clerk to the Board was exploring potential providers for the planned external effectiveness review of the Board of Governors. A proposal would be developed for consideration by the Membership and Nominations Committee at its meeting in early November. It was anticipated that the selected provider could observe the November meeting of the Board of Governors, with interviews and/or focus groups arranged thereafter, with a view to presenting the findings from the review to the Board at its March meeting; and
- Positive feedback had been received from Independent Members in relation to the strategy session held the previous day. Governors had commended the programme, organisation and venue for the session. Governors had welcomed the opportunity to meet with the University Executive Team (UET) and had noted particularly the positive contribution of the newer UET members who many Governors had met for the first time. The Vice-Chancellor advised that UET would reflect on the feedback received and this would be incorporated into the papers on *University, reimagined* that would be presented to the next meeting of the Board.

IT WAS RESOLVED

- (i) that the report be received and endorsed; and
- (ii) that, with effect from March 2022, the 'deep dives' into each of the Themes within the Strategy take place in the Monday evening presentation session with the Board.

21.47 Vice-Chancellor's Update

The Vice-Chancellor presented a report (Document D) updating the Board on a number of matters. The following matters were highlighted during discussion:

[Some of the detail of this minute has been withdrawn due to its confidential nature.]

- The University was unlikely to be impacted significantly by the proposals to make changes to the benefit structure of the Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS) given the relatively low level of membership in the scheme at NTU. A session had been arranged to brief affected colleagues on the proposals;
- The Vice-Chancellor noted a recent media report which outlined a proposal to lower the threshold at which graduates would be required to commence the repayment of student loans. This was understood to be one of a number of measures being considered by Government to reduce the cost of higher education on taxpayers; and
- The Chief Operating Officer and Registrar updated the Board on progress regarding the planning application submitted by the University for the proposed development at 42 Shakespeare Street. A decision was initially expected in June, however requests for further information about the application, combined with administrative delays at the planning authority, had prolonged the process. The University was hopeful that the application would be considered by the City Council's planning authority in October with a recommendation for approval.

IT WAS RESOLVED

that the report be received and endorsed.

21.48 Nottingham Trent Students' Union President's Update

The Board received a report (Document E) from the President of Nottingham Trent Students' Union (NTSU) in relation to Nottingham Trent Students' Union (NTSU) activities. The following matters were highlighted during discussion:

- Welcome Week events had been well received by students, with high levels of attendance at social and sporting events. There had also been strong engagement with society events held on campus. The Freshers' Team had provided outstanding support to students and positive feedback in this regard had been received from external venues and UPP;
- Positive comments had been received also in relation to the graduation ceremonies held at the Clifton campus from 1-9 September, with graduates welcoming the opportunity to celebrate their achievements in person. The provision of free gowns and mortar boards for the 2020 and 2021 graduating cohorts had been well received. The Board was advised that the University was exploring a number of options in relation to future design of graduation dress beyond the current academic year;
- The NTSU aimed to develop its relationships with local stakeholders during the forthcoming academic year, including the University of Nottingham Students' Union, Nottinghamshire MPs, the Police and the City Council. The NTSU Officers had recently contacted local Labour MPs seeking support for their concerns regarding the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill;
- A key area of focus for the NTSU President over the coming academic year was to conduct research into the experience of BTEC students at NTU. This aimed to identify areas for improvement and ensure that these students were engaged and supported during their time at NTU; and
- The NTSU President was asked to reflect on whether the University's performance in the National Student Survey 2021 could be attributed largely to the disruption caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, or whether the results suggested other factors needed to be addressed. The Board was advised that the impact of the pandemic, particularly on campus-based or City-centre activities, was considered to have been the driving factor. A more stringent approach to dealing with Covid-19 breaches had also been adopted by Nottinghamshire Police than experienced in other cities. The University was developing its communications processes with students to learn from its experiences during the pandemic.

IT WAS RESOLVED

that the report be received and endorsed.

21.49 Preparations for the 2021/22 Academic Year and the Covid-19 Response

The Board received a report (Document F) from the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic Development and Performance) and the Chief Operating Officer and Registrar on the preparations for the 2021/22 academic year and also the University's Covid-19 response. The following matters were highlighted during discussion:

- On average, 90% of teaching and learning had been timetabled to be held in person for the 2021/22 academic year and this approach had been well received by students. Given that many universities were not offering such a high volume

of on campus provision this year, it was important for the University to highlight this approach in its communications with students. The University continued to follow Government advice in relation to Covid-19 arrangements. The University had an agreed Outbreak Plan and this would continue to be monitored and updated as necessary;

- Arrangements to support Covid-19 testing remained in place, and students and colleagues were encouraged to report positive tests to enable the University to monitor case levels. The University was encouraging the take-up of Covid-19 vaccinations and had worked with the local Clinical Commissioning Group to put in place pop-up vaccination centres at the start of term;
- A spike in Covid-19 cases was anticipated as students start to mix and form new households. Students required to self-isolate would continue to be supported as in previous years. Given that the schools had prepared for both on campus and virtual scenarios this year, the University was well placed to support any students unable to attend in person if and when necessary;
- The Ways of Working project aimed to embed different ways of engaging with colleagues, using learning gained during the pandemic to drive positive changes to the operation of the University and enable its strategic ambitions to be realised;
- Changes adopted during the pandemic which had resulted in improvements to the University's provision for students were being retained (in whole or in part) for the 2021/22 academic year. Examples of positive changes relating to teaching and learning, student support, and communication and engagement with students were outlined in the report. The University would continue to monitor where further improvements could be made; and
- In response to a question regarding whether colleagues were anxious to return to campus, the Board was advised that it had proved helpful to maintain a consistent message throughout the pandemic: the University would adhere to Government guidelines. Colleagues had been encouraged to return to campus in recent months to refamiliarize themselves with being on campus and gain reassurance that appropriate measures were in place to ensure a safe working environment. Holding the graduation ceremonies in person in early September had also given a clear steer regarding how the University would operate throughout the academic year.

IT WAS RESOLVED

that the report be received and endorsed.

21.50 Student Recruitment 2021/22

The Board received a report (Document G) from the Chief Operating Officer and Registrar in relation to student recruitment for the 2021/22 academic year.

[The detail of this minute has been withdrawn due to its confidential nature.]

IT WAS RESOLVED

that the report be received and endorsed.

21.51 Admissions Policy 2022/23

The Board received a report (Document H) from the Chief Operating Officer and Registrar in relation to the University's admissions policy for the 2022/23 recruitment cycle. This had been reviewed and approved by the University Executive Team and the Academic Board. The following matters were highlighted during discussion:

[Some of the detail of this minute has been withdrawn due to its confidential nature.]

- The University had undertaken a fundamental review of its admissions policy for 2021/22 entry. A contextualised offer approach called Fairness First had been adopted. This focused on a personalised and differential offer based on individual applicant circumstances;
- The Fairness First approach would continue for 2022/23, but with minor changes to offer-making practices proposed; and
- The use of contextualised offers was a key driver to increase diversity and inclusion, attracting a broad range of students to the University.

IT WAS RESOLVED

- (i) that the report be received and endorsed; and
- (ii) that the University's admissions policy for the 2022/23 recruitment cycle be approved by the Board of Governors.

21.52 Confetti London

The Board received a report (Document I) presented by the Vice-Chancellor in relation to the NTU London project; this was now retitled Confetti London. The business case for Confetti London was presented to the Board with the endorsement of the Strategy, Policy, Finance and Resources Committee and the University Executive Team. The following matters were highlighted during discussion:

[Some of the detail of this minute has been withdrawn due to its confidential nature.]

- The Board recognised the merits of the proposal. The Board was advised that, whilst the initial business case was focused on Confetti, it was anticipated that the establishment of a site in London could provide broader opportunities for the University which could not yet be quantified. The financial and reputational risks associated with the project were acknowledged; and
- The Board endorsed the business case for Confetti London. In doing so, Governors requested that further information be presented to the Board as the project progressed, with particular focus on brand, market and execution.

IT WAS RESOLVED

- (i) that the report be received and endorsed;
- (ii) that the business case for the development of Confetti London be approved by the Board of Governors; and

- (iii) that details in relation to brand, market and execution of the Confetti London project be presented to the Board of Governors as matters progressed.

21.53 University, reimagined

[Some of the detail of this minute has been withdrawn due to its confidential nature.]

- (a) Key Performance Indicators

The Board received a report (Document J) from the Vice-Chancellor in relation to the KPI balanced scorecard for *University, reimagined*. This highlighted movements in the measures since these were last reported to the Board in July 2021.

IT WAS RESOLVED

that the report be received and endorsed.

- (b) National Student Surveys

The Board received a report (Document K) from the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic Development and Performance) in relation to the University's performance in the 2021 national student surveys: the National Student Survey (NSS); the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES); and the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES).

Analysis of the open comments provided by students had suggested that the pandemic had a marked effect on satisfaction scores.

IT WAS RESOLVED

that the report be received and endorsed.

21.54 Academic Governance

- (a) Academic Board

The Academic Board Member presented the unconfirmed minutes from the meeting of the Academic Board held on 15 September 2021 (Document L).

Academic Board had discussed in detail the University's performance in the National Student Survey 2021 and the Graduate Outcomes Survey. There had been an engaging discussion in relation to actions and preparations for the NSS 2022, with a different approach adopted to generate engagement through break-out group discussions. It was noted that the level of engagement and debate at Academic Board had increased since meetings had moved online.

IT WAS RESOLVED

that the report be received and endorsed.

(b) Academic Board Annual Report 2020/21

The Board received the Academic Board Annual Report 2020/21 (Document M) which provided an overview of the work of the Academic Board during the academic year.

Members were advised that the report formed part of the assurance provided to the Board of Governors in relation to its responsibilities in respect of oversight of academic governance.

IT WAS RESOLVED

that the report be received and endorsed.

21.55 Annual Report on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

The Board received a report (Document N) from the Chief Operating Officer and Registrar which provided an overview of the equality and diversity activity undertaken during the 2020/21 academic year. The following matters were highlighted during discussion:

[Some of the detail of this minute has been withdrawn due to its confidential nature.]

- The report aimed to provide assurance to the Board that there continued to be effective arrangements in place to ensure that NTU was discharging its obligations under the Equality Act (2010). An earlier version of the report had been presented to the Employment Policy Committee at its meeting held on 28 June 2021.

IT WAS RESOLVED

- (i) that the report be received and endorsed; and
- (ii) that a public version of the 2020/21 Annual Report on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion be published on the University's website.

21.56 Business from Standing Committees

(a) Audit and Risk Management Committee

The Board noted the unconfirmed minutes of the meeting of the Audit and Risk Management Committee held on 14 September 2021 (Document O). The Chair of the Committee noted that there had been a good presentation on cyber security. The positive progress made by the University in relation to its risk management processes had also been recognised by the Committee.

(b) Strategy, Policy, Finance and Resources Committee

The Board noted the unconfirmed minutes of the meeting of the Strategy, Policy, Finance and Resources Committee held on 14 September 2021 (Document P).

The Board was advised that the University was progressing the establishment of an Endowment Fund in order to support students to advance their careers. The University would be seeking philanthropic donors

to support this endeavour. A report was targeted for presentation to the next meeting of the Strategy, Policy, Finance and Resources Committee.

(c) Academic Assurance and Regulation Committee

The Chair of the Committee updated the Board on discussions at the inaugural meeting of the Academic Assurance and Regulation Committee held on 23 September 2021.

21.57 Application of the Corporation Seal

Members received and noted a report (Document Q) summarising the documentation to which the University's Corporation Seal had been applied since the previous meeting of the Board.

21.58 Any Other Business

Juergen Maier: Mr Maier commented that the quality of dialogue and ability to challenge decisions demonstrated the strength of the University's Board, particularly its diversity. He noted that he had enjoyed his tenure on the Board of Governors, and commended the University and its leadership.

21.59 Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Board of Governors was scheduled for Tuesday 23 November 2021 at 9.30 am. This would be preceded by presentations and dinner on Monday 22 November 2021.

The Pro-Chancellor advised the Board that he would be unable to attend the next meeting of the Board. The Deputy Pro-Chancellor would chair the meeting in his absence.