

NOTTINGHAM TRENT UNIVERSITY

**MINUTES OF THE VIRTUAL EXCEPTIONAL MEETING OF THE
BOARD OF GOVERNORS
HELD ON 31 MARCH 2020**

Present

Mr N Goulden, Pro-Chancellor (Chair)	Mrs L Holder
Ms A Brown	Mr G Love
Ms C Brown	Mr J Maier
Mr N Collard	Miss J Nelson
Mr S Denton	Professor E W Peck
Mr N Ebbs	Mrs S Walker-Smith
Mr I Ellis	Baroness D Warwick
Mrs S Fish	Mr D Williams
Mr B Fox	

In Attendance

Professor S Huttly, Incoming Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic Quality and Development)
Mr J A Lacey, Director of Finance
J McNeil, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic Quality and Development)
Professor N Wright, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation)
Mrs R C Jenkyn, Clerk to the Board of Governors
Miss J A Clews, Governance Services Manager (Minute Secretary)

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Sir D Nicholson and Mr O Woodley.

20.20 Welcomes and Farewells

The Pro-Chancellor welcomed members to this Exceptional meeting of the Board of Governors, convened virtually. The predominant focus of the meeting was to receive, and endorse where appropriate, the University's response to changes in the operating environment prompted by Covid-19.

The Pro-Chancellor noted that Nick Collard would be stepping down from membership of the Board of Governors after this meeting due to business commitments. The Board recorded thanks to Nick for his contributions to the University and the Board during his tenure and wished him well for the future.

20.21 Declarations of Interests 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.

20.22 Coronavirus Update

The Board received a report (Document A) from the Vice-Chancellor and colleagues from the University Executive Team (UET) in relation to the University's response to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

The Vice-Chancellor recorded thanks to all colleagues on their efforts in mitigating the impact of government restrictions on staff and students through moving the University's activities almost entirely online from 23 March. It was noted that the University was seeking to learn from this experience and ensure that any opportunities which arose from the development of its virtual capabilities were captured.

[Some of the detail of this minute has been withdrawn due to its confidential nature.]

The following matters were highlighted during discussion.

(a) Moving Teaching and Assessment On-line

The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic Quality and Development) summarised the arrangements in place to continue the delivery of teaching and assessment at the University:

- The University had been monitoring closely the guidance issued by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) to ensure that the arrangements being implemented by the University aligned with good practice and regulatory guidelines. Guidance from the Office for Students (OfS) was still awaited. The University had recognised the importance of student involvement and thanks were recorded to the Nottingham Trent Students' Union (NTSU) for its support in this regard;
- Arrangements had been put in place swiftly for teaching of all undergraduate and postgraduate taught provision to be accessed remotely from 23 March 2020. This had been delivered through extraordinary mobilisation by course teams. This was a different mode of delivery for colleagues and university experience for students, albeit NTU's focus on ensuring quality and standards had been maintained. Guidance had been prepared on teaching remotely and this had been accessed by over 3,000 colleagues. Postgraduate Research students were being encouraged to continue working on their doctoral projects, with supervisors providing ongoing online support;
- The importance of ensuring that students were engaging with the online provision was now a major focus of activity. The number of log-ins to the University's Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) was high. This would be monitored closely during this transition period. The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic Quality and Development) was working with the Director of Marketing and Communications to develop an enhanced engagement and retention plan in order to avoid increases in attrition;
- A number of students registered on apprenticeship programmes were electing to take a break in their learning due to the impact of the Coronavirus, usually on the advice of their employer. The effect of this would be kept under review and the University was working with the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) in this regard;
- An email communication had been issued to all students the previous week to provide assurance that the University was reviewing all assessment schedules for undergraduate and postgraduate taught provision. The review aimed to ensure that assessment deadlines were manageable and considered on a course by course basis. The University's revised approach to assignments and assessments sought to ensure that no students were disadvantaged as a result of the

Coronavirus pandemic. It was considered to be in the best interests of students to be able to take assessments as planned in order to either continue their studies or to graduate;

- The University was also updating its academic regulations to reflect this change in approach to learning, teaching and assessment and to include provisions to enable Examination Boards to make classified awards if students had an incomplete grade profile. The revised regulations would be considered by Academic Board at its meeting on 1 April 2020;
- There was an emerging trend in the sector for universities to adopt a 'no detriment' approach where students who submitted their assignments and assessment on time could not receive a lower grade at the end of the academic year than the one indicated by their performance to the end of March. NTU was not adding this element to its own policy at present, noting that it contained some potential issues about fairness, but would keep the position under review. The Board endorsed the approach being taken;
- Whilst students who created artefacts or practical outputs as part of their degree would be assessed online and could still progress or graduate, it had been acknowledged that students might nevertheless wish to create outputs to benefit their portfolio for employability purposes. Arrangements would therefore be made for students wishing to do this when the University re-opened. This would be aligned to the established NTUPass scheme which provided free accommodation and support for some students resitting assessments;
- The NTU President noted that the University had moved online quickly and this had been well received by students. NTSU societies had also moved their activities online and were working with the Virtual Lounge which offered support and social engagement to build an online community;
- A robust approach to communications had been adopted, deploying all channels available to engage with students. It was acknowledged that there could be challenges where students did not use any of these methods, which demonstrated the importance of the engagement plan being developed;
- Adopting the Government's advice for colleges, facilities for FE students had initially been kept open wherever possible for those students connected to key workers. However there had been no demand for this provision and facilities had therefore closed in line with other University buildings. The University would continue to monitor FE student engagement closely; and
- There had been no issues arising in relation to Prevent matters.

(b) Estates and Facilities

The Chief Operating Officer and Registrar summarised the arrangements implemented in relation to estates and facilities:

- The University had kept facilities open as long as possible. Government restrictions had resulted in the majority of the University's buildings, including libraries, closing on 23 March. Arrangements were in place to

provide access to specialist facilities, for example to care for animals at Brackenhurst and to monitor research labs at Clifton. This was on a planned and restricted basis in consultation with the respective Dean of School;

- A limited number of colleagues in essential services continued to maintain on-campus support to ensure safety and security, and to support students remaining in University accommodation;
- All estates development schemes were currently on hold;
- The majority of IT projects were also on hold, with priority given only to those projects which supported student attainment or retention, or were compliance related; and
- The Digital Technologies team was supporting colleagues and students in relation to access to systems remotely and any technical issues arising.

(c) Supporting Students who remain in Nottingham

The Chief Operating Officer and Registrar summarised the arrangements in place to support students who had remained in Nottingham or in NTU/UPP managed residential accommodation:

- A package of support had been developed for these students;
- The University had agreed to waive third term accommodation fees for students not using their University-owned or UPP residential accommodation. Discussions were ongoing with third party providers and private landlords to encourage them to adopt the same position. Support and advice would be made available to students on their housing rights during this crisis. The University's hardship fund had also been increased to provide financial assistance to students experiencing difficulties; and
- The Board endorsed the decision to waive term three accommodation fees and discussed the responsibility for the financial liability arising from the decision. The Chief Operating Officer and Registrar explained to the Board the current contractual position, and the points at which risk transferred from UPP to the University during the normal accommodation cycle.

(d) Recruiting Students for the 2020 Intake

The Vice-Chancellor provided an update in relation to the recruitment position and actions underway for the 2020/21 academic year:

- Recruitment for 2020/21 had been progressing well prior to the Coronavirus restrictions, with applications and offers higher on a year-on-year basis;
- In accordance with the moratorium prescribed by the Universities Minister and the Office for Students, all institutions had suspended making unconditional offers for two weeks;

- The Universities UK (UUK) Board was exploring options to stabilise the recruitment position for the autumn. This included the possibility of a number “cap” although no firm proposals had yet been developed; and
- The incoming Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic Quality and Development) would be looking at longer term implications arising from this situation and also what could be learnt from current developments in terms of future delivery.

(e) Immediate Financial Implications

The Director of Finance provided an overview of the immediate financial impact to the University and the actions in place to mitigate this, together with the high level modelling undertaken for the next academic year

(Baroness D Warwick and Mrs S Walker-Smith left the meeting.)

- Modelling had been undertaken for the 2020/21 financial position considering scenarios where large percentages of income were lost from international and home students;
- The University was proposing to access the Government’s Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme. Heads of Professional Services had identified those colleagues who would be part of the first phase of the Scheme. It was confirmed that the University would make up the shortfall (20%) in pay from the Scheme so that no employees would be financially disadvantaged. The Board endorsed the proposal to access the scheme;
- To complement this, a revised approach to vacancy management had been introduced to ensure that recruitment was confined to essential posts, and temporary and agency staffing had been largely discontinued. Restrictions had also been imposed on non-pay spend;
- The University Executive Team was of the view that the capital expenditure programme for the current year and next year should be largely suspended, which would have a significant positive impact on cashflow. The Board endorsed this approach; and
- In response to a question regarding the repayment of student fees, it was considered that there was no requirement for tuition fees to be remitted given that NTU continued to teach and assess all students, and undergraduate students would receive their next loan instalment from the Student Loans Company.

(f) Supporting the Wider Community

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation) summarised the work underway within the University to support the wider community:

- In conjunction with the University of Nottingham, NTU had supplied a number of machines which could be used to test for COVID-19. These were now based at a testing centre in Milton Keynes;
- Colleagues were working to produce PPE for the health sector via its expertise and facilities in 3D printing and product design;

- The University of Nottingham was leading on providing temporary accommodation for NHS staff. NTU would be able to assist with this if required by the emergency services;
- The University was holding weekly discussions with members of the Local Resilience Forum and other local leaders and would offer support wherever possible; and
- The Director of Student and Community Engagement had been nominated as the University's volunteering lead. The University would seek to encourage colleagues furloughed to undertake volunteering activity.

The Board of Governors commended the University and the University Executive Team for the response and actions in place to support students during the Coronavirus pandemic.

IT WAS RESOLVED

- (i) that the report be received and endorsed; and
- (ii) that the Board of Governors endorsed the actions underway or in train in response to the Coronavirus pandemic.

20.23 Vice-Chancellor's Update

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

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

- The University and the sector had raised a number of concerns in relation to the methodology used by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) for the Graduate Outcome Survey.

IT WAS RESOLVED

that the report be received and endorsed.

20.24 Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Board of Governors was scheduled for 12 May 2020 at 9.30 am.

Rebecca Jenkyn, Clerk to the Board
April 2020