

NOTTINGHAM TRENT UNIVERSITY

**MINUTES OF THE VIRTUAL MEETING OF THE  
BOARD OF GOVERNORS  
HELD ON 12 MAY 2020**

Present

Mr N Goulden, Pro-Chancellor (Chair)	Mr G Love
Ms A Brown	Mr J Maier (minute reference 20.29 onwards)
Ms C Brown	Miss J Nelson
Mr S Denton	Sir D Nicholson
Mr N Ebbs	Professor E W Peck
Mr I Ellis	Baroness D Warwick
Mrs S Fish	Mr D Williams
Mr B Fox	Mr O Woodley
Mrs L Holder	

In Attendance

Professor S Huttly, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic Development and Performance)  
Mr J A Lacey, Director of Finance (for minute reference 20.33)  
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 Mrs S Walker-Smith.

20.25 Welcomes

The Pro-Chancellor welcomed members to this meeting of the Board of Governors, convened virtually.

20.26 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.

20.27 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

(a) Minutes of the Previous Meetings

Minutes of the meeting held on 11 February 2020 (Document A) and the exceptional meeting held on 31 March 2020 (Document B) were approved and accepted as a true record.

(b) Matters Arising

Members received a report (Document C) in relation to matters arising from the previous meetings. All action points had been progressed as outlined in the report. Updates would be given as appropriate under the relevant agenda item.

## 20.28 Pro-Chancellor's Update

The Pro-Chancellor updated the Board on a number of matters, including discussions held at the meeting of the Membership and Nominations Committee on 11 May 2020. The following matters were reported:

*[Some of the detail of this minute has been withdrawn due to its confidential nature.]*

### Membership Matters

- Sue Fish would reach the end of her first term of office on the Board of Governors on 31 August 2020. The Pro-Chancellor had met with Sue to review her first term of office and, with the unanimous support of the Membership and Nominations Committee, recommended that Sue be re-appointed for a second term of three years with effect from 1 September 2020. Sue would retain her existing memberships of the Audit and Risk Management Committee and the Remuneration Committee, and also her role as the Governor-Lead for FE, Safeguarding and Prevent;
- Sarah Walker-Smith would reach the end of her first term of office on the Board of Governors on 31 August 2020. The Pro-Chancellor had met with Sarah to review her first term of office and, with the unanimous support of the Membership and Nominations Committee, recommended that Sarah be re-appointed for a second term of three years with effect from 1 September 2020. Sarah would retain her existing role as Deputy Chair of the Audit and Risk Management Committee;
- Ian Ellis would reach the end of his second term of office on the Board of Governors on 30 September 2020. The Pro-Chancellor had contacted Ian to review his second term of office and, with the unanimous support of the Membership and Nominations Committee, recommended that Ian be re-appointed for a third term of three years with effect from 1 October 2020. Ian would retain his role as Chair of the Audit and Risk Management Committee;
- Owen Woodley would reach the end of his second term of office on the Board of Governors on 30 September 2020. The Pro-Chancellor had contacted Owen to review his second term of office and, with the unanimous support of the Membership and Nominations Committee, recommended that Owen be re-appointed for a third term of three years with effect from 1 October 2020. Owen would retain his existing role as Chair of the Employment Policy Committee, and also his role as a Trustee of the John van Geest Foundation Cancer Research Fund;
- The Pro-Chancellor reported that Sarah Walker-Smith had indicated her wish to step down from the Board of Nottingham Trent Students' Union due to work commitments. The Pro-Chancellor recommended, with the unanimous support of the Membership and Nominations Committee, that Geoff Love be confirmed as the University's nominated representative on the NTSU Board of Trustees with effect from 1 June 2020;
- The role of Deputy Chair of the Strategy, Policy, Finance and Resources Committee had become vacant upon Nick Collard's retirement from the Board in March. The Pro-Chancellor recommended, with the unanimous support of the Membership and Nominations Committee, that Nick Ebbs be appointed as Deputy Chair of the Strategy, Policy, Finance and Resources Committee with immediate effect;

- Bradley Fox's tenure as President of Nottingham Trent Students' Union, and therefore his membership of the Board of Governors, had been extended to 31 July 2020 to ensure continuity during the current period. Conor Naughton, the incoming President for the 2020/21 academic year, would take up appointment on 1 August 2020;
- In accordance with its delegated authority, the Membership and Nominations Committee had approved the following re-appointments relating to co-opted membership of supporting Committees:
  - Paul Sullivan had been re-appointed as a Co-opted Member of the Audit and Risk Management Committee for a third term of three years effective from 1 February 2020; and
  - Sarah Carroll had been re-appointed as a Co-opted Member of the Strategy, Policy, Finance and Resources Committee for a third term of three years effective from 1 December 2020;
- The Pro-Chancellor provided an update in relation to the search for potential candidates for appointment to the Board;

#### Treasury Management Policy

- The Pro-Chancellor reported that he had approved, under Chair's action, a temporary amendment to the University's Treasury Management Policy.

#### **IT WAS RESOLVED**

- (i) that the report be received and endorsed; and
- (ii) that the recommendations in relation to membership matters as set out above be approved and endorsed;
- (iii) that the temporary amendment to the Treasury Management Policy approved under Chair's action be noted.

#### 20.29 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.]*

#### University, reimagined

- The University was progressing key strands of activity in relation to implementation of the new strategy during the current Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic restrictions. An update on progress since the previous meeting of the Board was appended to the report;

#### Financial Support for UK Universities

- Universities UK (UUK) had developed for Government a proposed package of stability measures to support the HE sector. The package aimed to recognise the diverse nature of the sector and the challenges it was facing and had been supported by Vice-Chancellors across the sector;

- The Government had now confirmed its support package for higher education providers and students, which was broadly in line with the UUK package, and the details of this were appended to the report. Institutions were expected to mitigate the financial impact on the current academic year and the main focus for financial support therefore related to the 2020/21 academic year;
- The Board noted that there were a range of existing Government schemes in place to support businesses during this time and confirmation had been received that universities were eligible to apply for these;
- In relation to student recruitment, the University and the sector was planning for an intake of Home/EU undergraduate students in the autumn, although the mode of delivery of the provision was expected to be adapted to meet the pandemic restrictions. Whilst it was expected that international student recruitment numbers may be impacted in the autumn term of 2020/21, it was considered that a higher in-take in January might be achieved;
- A voluntary intake cap had been agreed, with a 5% tolerance applied, to full-time Home/EU undergraduate recruitment forecasts submitted previously by providers to the Office for Students (OfS). This aimed to ensure that institutions which had high international student numbers would not seek to increase their home undergraduate recruitment to the detriment of other institutions;
- The re-profiling of tuition fee payments from the Student Loans Company to universities had also been agreed to support the cash flow challenges in the autumn term;
- Bringing forward £100m QR (Quality-related Research) funding into the current academic year aimed to address some of the immediate pressures being faced to support research activity across the sector. This would be welcomed particularly by research-intensive universities (which were generally more exposed to the anticipated reduction in international recruitment) which would receive a higher proportion of funding;

(Mr J Maier joined the meeting.)

- The Government was establishing a joint taskforce to review research sustainability in the short and long terms. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation) noted that the University would be seeking opportunities to engage with this review in order to ensure that NTU was not impacted adversely by potential changes to research funding;
- The Board welcomed the package developed to support the sector, recognising the significant success of achieving a consensus of opinion across the sector;

#### Pay and Pensions

- Negotiations for the 2020/21 pay round were unlikely to resume until autumn;
- Following consultation with local trades unions, it had been agreed that, whilst appraisal review discussions would be undertaken as planned this summer, colleagues would not receive a performance rating and no financial bonuses would be awarded. The payment of a collective reward to recognise and thank colleagues for their support and efforts was being considered, although any decision in this regard would need to take into account the financial position of the University; and

National Student Survey

- The results of the NSS 2020 would be released on 1 July.

**IT WAS RESOLVED**

that the report be received and endorsed.

20.30 Nottingham Trent Students' Union President's Update

The Board received a report (Document E) from the President of Nottingham Trent Students' Union (NTSU) on matters relating to the wider student experience.

The Board was advised that elections for NTSU Officers for the 2020/21 academic year had been conducted solely online and slightly later than usual due to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic restrictions. The incoming NTSU Officers would commence their roles on 1 August 2020. It was noted that, in accordance with the University's legislative obligations for oversight of NTSU activities, the revised arrangements for the conduct of the elections at the start of Term 3 (appended to the report) had been reviewed and endorsed by the University Executive Team. It was reported that students and candidates had engaged positively in the election process.

**IT WAS RESOLVED**

that the report be received and endorsed.

20.31 Sustaining the Quality of the Student Experience

The Board received and considered a report (Document F) from the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic Development and Performance) in relation to the arrangements in place to uphold the quality and standard of teaching and assessment at the University during the initial phase of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. The following matters were highlighted during discussion:

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

- The focus of the University's activities related to ensuring that a high quality student experience was maintained and that the high standard of teaching and assessment was upheld. The University had applied its existing quality frameworks, adapted as required, and had ensured compliance with Office for Students (OfS) and Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) requirements;
- The revised approach adopted in relation to assessments would ensure that no students were disadvantaged as a result of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. This included the provision of a 'safety net score' for students which would be based on their performance to the end of March 2020 (i.e. prior to the lockdown phase). This was to ensure that they suffered no detriment as a result of the pandemic and could continue their studies or graduate as planned. The University had worked closely with the NTSU in the development of the revised approach;
- The University was collecting data in relation to student engagement with online teaching and learning and was also monitoring the quality of provision. Further information would be shared with the Board following the meeting in relation to the level of student engagement during the initial transition period before the

Easter break. It was noted that Success for All remained a key focus for both the University and the wider sector. The NTSU President noted that feedback received from students had highlighted some minor issues which was to be expected given the rapid shift to online teaching and assessment, but that students were on the whole supportive of the University's actions;

- A number of enhanced measures to support student engagement during this time had been established. These would be evaluated to inform future practice;
- Planning was underway in relation to preparations for the 2020/21 academic year, led by a small sub-group of the University Executive Team, working closely with schools and professional services; and
- The student calling service had been well received by students, and the University would review these data in order to determine where additional support may be beneficial to avoid any students feeling lonely or isolated. It was reported that the NTSU had been involved heavily in the delivery of pastoral support and extra-curricular activities to help engender a sense of community. The NTSU President noted that there had also been an increase in society memberships during this period.

#### **IT WAS RESOLVED**

- (i) that the report be received and endorsed; and
- (ii) that further information in relation to the level of student engagement during the initial transition to online provision before the Easter break be shared with the Board of Governors.

#### 20.32 Student Recruitment

The Board received a report (Document G) from the Chief Operating Officer and Registrar in relation to student recruitment. This incorporated the latest recruitment position and planning for 2020/21, together with an update on government, sector and regulatory interventions arising from the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. The following matters were highlighted during discussion:

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

- The number of Home/EU undergraduate applications received for the 2020/21 academic year was higher than the previous year. It was confirmed that, given the volatility of the current situation, it was difficult to confidently forecast accurately the likely outturn for 2020/21. An update on student recruitment would be presented at the July meeting of the Board;
- The forecast recruitment numbers submitted previously by the University to the Office for Students (OfS) was expected to be broadly in line with the level of recruitment now permitted under the voluntary intake cap introduced for 2020/21;
- The University had ensured that it was fully compliant with the moratorium on unconditional offer-making introduced by the Department for Education (DfE) and the OfS in March. The OfS had now launched a consultation process in relation to the addition of a new time-limited condition of registration which would be applied retrospectively from 11 March 2020; and

- Noting the particular challenges faced by graduates seeking to enter the workplace this year, the University's Employability team was supporting students and continued to engage with employers to highlight the benefits a graduate could bring to their business. The alumni discount offered to recent NTU graduates wishing to undertake postgraduate study had been maintained at 20%. The University was also reviewing the bursaries and scholarships available to ensure that these remained appropriate and balanced across the schools.

**IT WAS RESOLVED**

that the report be received and endorsed.

20.33 Finance Update

The Board received a report (Document H) from the Director of Finance in relation to the current year financial forecast and modelling for 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.]*

- Rigorous cost control measures had been implemented and spend had been limited to business critical items only;
- Financial resilience modelling for 2020/21 had been undertaken, based on a number of assumptions in relation to student recruitment and income;
- Prior to the next meeting of the Board, the University would review further mitigating actions which could be applied in the event that there was a greater downturn in student recruitment from that modelled; and
- Consideration would also be given to the additional costs likely to be incurred to ensure that the University was able to comply with any social distancing measures required upon a return to campus.

**IT WAS RESOLVED**

that the report be received and endorsed.

20.34 Estates and Facilities Update

The Board received an updating report (Document I) from the Chief Operating Officer and Registrar on campus developments for the City, Clifton, Brackenhurst and Confetti campuses. The following matters were highlighted during discussion:

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

- The majority of estates projects had been suspended in the light of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. Capital expenditure had been reduced significantly for 2020/21 and focused solely on those works already underway; and
- The University was working with contractors on campus to ensure that construction sites were COVID-19 safe and complied with government guidelines.

**IT WAS RESOLVED**

- (i) that the report be received and endorsed.

20.35 Research Update

The Board received a report (Document J) from the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation) in relation to research matters, including the University's continuing preparations for the Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2021. The following matters were highlighted during discussion:

- Researchers were keen to recommence laboratory-based activities upon the easing of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic restrictions. The University was undertaking careful planning in this regard to ensure a safe and secure environment for colleagues;
- The level of research investment at the University had been reduced as part of the measures to mitigate the financial impact of COVID-19. This would be kept under review;
- Support for research students was being provided virtually and student engagement was being monitored closely. This was working well and the University was exploring opportunities to develop blended-learning PhD programmes in the future;
- Preparations for the REF 2021 continued. Research England had recognised the disruption caused by the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and had therefore launched a consultation in relation to delaying the scheduled date for final submission to 31 March 2021 and changing the date by which impact for case studies was demonstrated to 31 December 2020. The approach had been supported by the University. It was anticipated that the dates would be confirmed by Research England later this month; and
- The University was working closely with local businesses and student start-ups and also developing plans to support economic recovery after the lockdown measures were eased. The University was working with a number of local partners during the COVID-19 crisis, providing support to the Local Resilience Forum and the NHS. Further information in relation to the University's Knowledge Exchange activities would be included in future reports to the Board.

**IT WAS RESOLVED**

that the report be received and endorsed.

20.36 Academic Board

The Academic Board Member presented the unconfirmed minutes from the meeting of the Academic Board held on 1 April 2020 (Document K).

The Board was advised that many of the matters considered by Academic Board had been reported earlier in the meeting. The Academic Board had discussed in detail the changes required to the University's academic regulations consequent to COVID-19, and had endorsed the same. It was confirmed that the level of debate and engagement at Academic Board continued to be positive and that a sense of this would be captured within future minutes.



**IT WAS RESOLVED**

that the report be received and endorsed.

20.37 Business from Standing Committees

(a) Employment Policy Committee

The Board noted the unconfirmed minutes of the meeting of the Employment Policy Committee held on 10 February 2020, a verbal report having been given at the previous meeting.

20.38 Application of the Corporation Seal

The Board was advised that the University's Corporation Seal had not been applied to any documentation since the previous meeting of the Board.

20.39 Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Board of Governors was scheduled for 7 July 2020 at 9.30 am. This would be preceded by presentations on Monday 6 July 2020. These would all be held virtually.

Rebecca Jenkyn, Clerk to the Board  
May 2020