

NOTTINGHAM TRENT UNIVERSITY

MINUTES OF THE VIRTUAL MEETING OF THE
BOARD OF GOVERNORS
HELD ON 7 JULY 2020

Present

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

In Attendance

Professor S Huttly, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic Development and Performance)
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)
Ms A Acheampong, NTSU Vice-President Education
Mr C Naughton, Incoming NTSU President (Observer)

Ms C Bell, Head of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion } for minute reference
Mrs J Billam, Director of Human Resources } 20.45
J McNeil, Interim Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education) }
Mr J A Lacey, Director of Finance, for minute references 20.51 and 20.52

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Mr I Ellis and Mr B Fox.

20.40 Welcomes and Farewells

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

The Pro-Chancellor welcomed Afua Acheampong, the Vice-President Education of Nottingham Trent Students' Union, who was representing the NTSU President at this meeting.

The President-elect of NTSU, Conor Naughton, was attending the meeting as an observer. His appointment as the NTSU President and as a member of the Board of Governors would commence on 1 August 2020.

20.41 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.

20.42 Minutes

(a) Minutes of the Previous Meeting

Minutes of the virtual meeting of the Board of Governors held on 12 May 2020 (Document A) were approved and accepted as a true record.

(b) Matters Arising

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

20.43 Pro-Chancellor's Update

The Pro-Chancellor presented a report (Document C) which updated the Board on two recent appointments to external bodies:

- The Vice-Chancellor had been appointed to the role of Deputy Lieutenant of Nottinghamshire with effect from 1 July 2020; and
- David Williams had been appointed as interim Chair of the D2N2 Local Enterprise Partnership. It was not anticipated that this appointment would result in a conflict of interest, but this would be recorded accordingly should an incidence arise.

IT WAS RESOLVED

that the report be received and endorsed.

20.44 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.]

Financial Support for UK Universities

- The second phase of the financial support package available to the sector had been announced recently. A fund was to be made available to extend research projects funded by UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) and universities would also be permitted to reallocate internally any underspends that were usually returned to UKRI at the end of a grant;
- The Government would provide universities with funds up to a limit of 80% of the loss of international student fee income that would have normally been used to subsidise research activity. The amount would be capped at the value of the institution's charity and industry research income, and would be in the form of loans (75%) and grants (25%);

Graduate Outcomes Survey

- The first tranche of data derived from the Graduate Outcome Survey (GOS) had been released. The survey, which had replaced the previous Destination of

Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) survey, was issued to all graduates 15 months after completion of their degrees. There had been concerns raised across the sector in relation to the methodology used for the GOS and the survey had produced much new data that required interpretation, understanding, and further analysis. A second tranche of data on the subjective wellbeing questions and self-employment levels was expected to be released on 9 July;

- There were no directly comparable indicators of student employment outcomes with those previously derived from the DLHE survey, in part because Further Study was not classified by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) as an 'employment destination' and was viewed rather as a transition stage. A summary indicator of 'all types of employment' suggested that NTU had performed well compared to the sector average;
- The University would be seeking to develop a new KPI in this area;

National Student Survey 2020

- The results of the NSS 2020 were due to be published on 15 July and these would be shared with the Board when available;

HE Policy

- A White Paper was expected to be published shortly on the Government's plans for the Further Education (FE) sector, with a particular focus on skills development. Details in relation to the HE sector, in part a formal response to the Augar Review, were expected in the autumn; and
- In addition to working with Universities UK, a position statement was being developed to ensure that the positive work being undertaken by NTU was communicated appropriately.

IT WAS RESOLVED

that the report be received and endorsed.

20.45 Race Equality at NTU

The Board received a report (Document E) setting out a detailed overview of the University's approach to achieving race equality. This outlined the early areas of focus since 2014, how this had advanced to a whole institutional approach, the current position and the future direction. The following matters were highlighted during discussion:

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

- A series of listening sessions had been held with BAME (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic) colleagues and students, including participants in the Black Leadership Programme, focusing on their lived experiences at NTU and what practical steps might be taken by the University to address their concerns;
- It was important that colleagues and students felt able to report incidents and have confidence that the University would act robustly when matters were raised;

- A new group had been formed, chaired by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Culture), to support a co-ordinated University-wide approach to celebrate Black History Month;
- The University was seeking to ensure the inclusion of BAME colleagues on recruitment panels;
- The Black Leadership Programme was considered to have been a great success and expansion of the programme for 2020/21 was being progressed;
- The Vice-Chancellor's Mentoring Scheme had been targeted initially at Associate Professors, providing support for advancement into professorial roles. The scheme had received positive feedback and opportunities to expand this were being explored;
- The University was keen to adopt bold initiatives in order to address the profile of its University Executive Team and senior academics and therefore encourage more BAME colleagues and students to seek routes for progression;
- In addition to driving diversity in executive and senior roles, the Pro-Chancellor and the Vice-Chancellor were progressing discussions in relation to the appointment of new members to the Board of Governors, with a particular focus on enhancing BAME representation; and
- A key focus for the University continued to be reducing attainment and progressions gaps for disadvantaged student groups. The sector-leading initiatives introduced by the University as part of the Success for All project were subject to frequent review and if these were not having the desired impact on attainment or progression, the University would explore broader developments.

The Board welcomed the work undertaken to date which demonstrated the University's commitment in relation to addressing race equality. The importance of seizing the momentum to drive forward these developments was noted. The Board endorsed the University's plans and the actions proposed to ensure appropriate BAME representation on the Board of Governors, in executive and senior roles, and in employee and student recruitment processes.

The Board was advised that specialist training had been developed for the University Executive Team in relation to White Privilege and anti-racism, and how members could become a BAME ally to drive change. Training would be extended to the University Leadership Team and more widely in due course. Governors confirmed that they would welcome the opportunity to receive bespoke training in this regard.

An updating report setting out the University's proposed actions over the next twelve months in relation to addressing race equality would be presented to the Board of Governors at its meeting on 29 September 2020.

IT WAS RESOLVED

- (i) that the report be received and endorsed;
- (ii) that an updating report setting out the University's initial action plan in relation to addressing race equality be presented to the Board of Governors on 29 September 2020; and

- (iii) that bespoke training in relation to White Privilege be arranged for members of the Board of Governors in due course.

20.46 Nottingham Trent Students' Union Update

The Board received a report (Document F) from the Vice-President Education of Nottingham Trent Students' Union (NTSU) on matters relating to the wider student experience. A summary was also provided of activities planned for the 2020/21 academic year.

The Board was advised that the NTSU was working closely with the University in relation to its work to address the issues raised by the Black Lives Matter movement, including work to embed race and culture into the curriculum. The NTSU was providing welfare support to those students affected by these issues, and also advice to students seeking to support their peers.

The Pro-Chancellor noted that the incoming NTSU Officers would take up their roles on 1 August and thanked the VP Education, and the outgoing team, for their efforts. The Board of Governors wished the NTSU representatives well for the future.

IT WAS RESOLVED

that the report be received and endorsed.

20.47 Academic Governance

The Board received a report (Document G) from the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic Development and Performance) in relation to academic matters, including sustaining the quality of the student experience. 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 the examination boards for undergraduate courses had now concluded. Positive comments had been received from external examiners on the overall process adopted by the University in the light of the Coronavirus pandemic to ensure both that there was no detriment to student awards and quality standards were maintained. An initial report in relation to undergraduate student outcomes would be presented to the University Executive Team shortly, and reported to the Board at its September meeting. The outcomes for postgraduate students would be reported at a later date;
- Planning continued for the 2020/21 academic year and beyond, whilst recognising that the uncertainty caused by the pandemic may require plans to be adapted further;
- The University was preparing to open its campuses from September and offer a mixed model of learning and extra-curricular opportunities for students through a combination of online and physical delivery. The aim was to provide a positive experience to students, recognising that this would be different than in previous years; and
- The University was working in partnership with Vision West Nottinghamshire College to establish higher education provision in Mansfield. This was on track to commence as planned in September 2020 notwithstanding the pandemic had delayed some projected activities.

IT WAS RESOLVED

that the report be received and endorsed.

20.48 Academic Board

The Academic Board Member presented the unconfirmed minutes from the meeting of the Academic Board held on 17 June 2020 (Document H). The following matters were highlighted during discussion:

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

- The University's Student Code of Behaviour had been revised in order to clarify elements relating to sexual violence and misconduct. The Code had also been updated to ensure that the University was able to enforce requirements in relation to social distancing;
- The Academic Board had discussed in detail the University's approach to race equality and had concurred that decisive action was required to demonstrate the seriousness with which the University was addressing the issue. There had been particular focus given to the work to decolonise the curriculum. The Academic Board had also suggested that the roll-out of White Privilege and unconscious bias training to all colleagues across the University be considered;
- Academic Board had endorsed fully the proposed admissions policy for 2021/22; and
- The Vice-Chancellor reported that holding meetings of the Academic Board virtually during the pandemic restrictions had proved successful, generating a strong level of debate and engagement from members.

IT WAS RESOLVED

that the report be received and endorsed.

20.49 Student Recruitment 2020/21

The Board received a report (Document I) from the Chief Operating Officer and Registrar in relation to student recruitment 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.]

- The overall forecast recruitment position for the 2020/21 academic year was positive;
- The number of students likely to be recruited through Clearing was expected to be broadly similar to previous years. Other indicators in relation to students taking up their places were noted to be positive, e.g. levels of student loan applications and accommodation bookings; and
- The forecasts for international undergraduate and postgraduate taught student recruitment were also positive. Given the uncertainty arising from the Coronavirus pandemic, it was difficult to predict the likely outturn at this stage. Plans were in place to support students, including making arrangements for quarantine if required. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation)

was working closely with partners, including local councils and Public Health England, to ensure that appropriate mitigations and plans were in place to manage a variety of potential scenarios.

IT WAS RESOLVED

that the report be received and endorsed.

20.50 Admissions Policy 2021/22

The Board received a report (Document J) from the Chief Operating Officer and Registrar in relation to the University's admissions policy for the 2021/22 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 been reducing its use of conditional unconditional offers since the development of the 2020/21 contextualised offer strategy. Given the recent regulatory changes aimed at preventing the use of conditional unconditional offers across the sector, the University had accelerated its plans and had developed a revised approach for offer-making for the 2021/22 academic year;
- The 'Fairness First' policy proposed for 2021/22 would provide a more extensive contextual approach, focusing on a personalised and differential offers based on individual applicant circumstances;
- The use of unconditional offers was still permitted on the basis of an exceptional portfolio and/or interview performance, or where an applicant had pending qualifications if they were considered to be exceptional; and
- The University supported the development of the level three T level courses and would review its entry criteria for 2022/23 entry to incorporate these.

IT WAS RESOLVED

- (i) that the report be received and endorsed; and
- (ii) that the University's admissions policy for the 2021/22 recruitment cycle be approved by the Board of Governors.

20.51 Finance Update

The Board received a report (Document K) from the Director of Finance in relation to the current year financial forecast and modelling for the 2020/21 academic year. Members were advised that the report had been reviewed in detail by the Audit and Risk Management Committee and the Strategy, Policy, Finance and Resources Committee and both had been supportive of the University's approach.

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

The following matters were highlighted during discussion:

- The potential reduction in income in the current year associated with the lockdown measures implemented in the light of the Coronavirus pandemic had been lower than anticipated. The rigorous cost control measures implemented by the University and the deferral of capital expenditure had resulted in this loss being mitigated completely;
- Following discussion at the previous meeting of the Board of Governors, financial modelling for 2020/21 had been undertaken for two potential scenarios. The cautious and prudent approach taken by the University was noted to be broadly in line with the sector; and
- Greater clarity in relation to the student fee income forecast would be available following Clearing in August and the financial forecast and modelling would be reviewed at that time.

IT WAS RESOLVED

that the report be received and endorsed.

20.52 Estates and Facilities Update

The Board received an updating report (Document L) 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.]

- Preparations and operational planning for a return to campus for the 2020/21 academic year were underway. The University continued to monitor Government guidance and ensure that appropriate risk assessments were completed. Colleagues would continue to work from home/remotely wherever possible. A detailed communications plan was in place in order to provide assurance to applicants, students, employees and other stakeholders.

IT WAS RESOLVED

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

20.53 Research Governance

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

- Some laboratory-based activities, based on prioritisation within the schools, had restarted on campus upon the easing of the Coronavirus pandemic restrictions;
- The level of research investment at the University had reduced as part of the measures to mitigate the financial impact of pandemic. An interim position had been allocated for 2020/21 and this would be kept under review. A number of colleagues had also secured external funding for research related to the Coronavirus;

- The successful transition to online support for PhD students during the pandemic had been used to inform the development of an at-distance PhD programme;
- A comprehensive review of the University's research degree regulations and research governance arrangements had been undertaken. This had taken into account the experiences of staff and students and also the removal of colleges from the University's organisational structure. The revised regulations, incorporating the addition of blended and online learning into PhD programmes, had been approved by the Academic Board;
- The University's preparations for the REF 2021 continued. Research England had confirmed the revised submission date as 31 March 2021, with the impact assessment period extended to 31 December 2020. The staff census date and the deadline for research outputs remained unchanged. The results from the REF 2021 were now expected in April 2022;
- Enterprise and Knowledge Exchange activities continued to be delivered virtually. The University continued to support local partners and deliver a range of programmes to support economic development and recovery from lockdown in the region. The University continued to seek opportunities to submit bids to support growth and job creation. The potential expansion of the University's work in relation to smart campus developments was also being explored; and
- The Development and Alumni Relations Office had maintained engagement with alumni, donors and supporters of the University during the pandemic restrictions.

IT WAS RESOLVED

that the report be received and endorsed.

20.54 Governance Effectiveness Review

The Board received a report (Document N) from the Pro-Chancellor and the Clerk to the Board of Governors in relation to the annual review of the actions taken in response to the Governance Effectiveness Review undertaken by AdvanceHE in 2018. An update was also provided on the findings arising from the light touch review undertaken in 2019.

A short survey would be issued to all Governors during July to seek their views on the current arrangements. The Pro-Chancellor encouraged all members to complete and return the survey to the Clerk. The results would be compiled for discussion at the next meeting of the Board of Governors.

The Pro-Chancellor noted that an external review of the University's governance arrangements would next be undertaken in 2022. An external review of Academic Board was scheduled to be undertaken within the autumn term.

IT WAS RESOLVED

that the report be received and endorsed.

20.55 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 23 June 2020 (Document O).

(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 23 June 2020 (Document P).

(c) Employment Policy Committee

The Chair of the Committee updated the Board on discussions at the meeting of the Employment Policy Committee held on 6 July 2020.

20.56 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.

20.57 Any Other Business

Detail redacted.

20.58 Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Board of Governors was scheduled for Tuesday 29 September 2020 at 9.30 am. This would be preceded by presentations on Monday 28 September 2020. These would all be held virtually.

Rebecca Jenkyn, Clerk to the Board
July 2020