

NOTTINGHAM TRENT UNIVERSITY

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE  
BOARD OF GOVERNORS  
HELD ON 12 FEBRUARY 2019

Present

Mr N Goulden, Pro-Chancellor (Chair)	Mr J Maier
Ms N Hill, Deputy Pro-Chancellor (Deputy Chair)	Miss J Nelson
Ms C Brown	Ms K Moore
Mr N Collard	Professor E W Peck
Mr S Denton	Ms A Somal
Mr N Ebbs	Mrs S Walker-Smith
Mrs S Fish	Mr T M Walmsley
Mr B Fox	Baroness D Warwick
Mrs L Holder	Mr D Williams
Mr G Love	Mr O Woodley

In Attendance

Mrs R C Jenkyn, Clerk to the Board of Governors  
Professor E Simmons, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic and Student Affairs)  
Professor N Wright, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation)  
Miss J A Clews, Governance Services Manager (Minute Secretary)  
Professor C Ryan, Pro Vice-Chancellor (International) and Head of College (Business, Law and Social Sciences) for minute reference 19.08  
Mrs J Billam, Director of Human Resources, for minute reference 19.09  
Mr J A Lacey, Director of Finance, for minute references 19.14 and 19.15

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Mr I Ellis.

**19.01 Welcomes**

The Pro-Chancellor welcomed Juergen Maier, Jennie Nelson and David Williams who were attending their first formal meeting of the Board of Governors following their appointments as Co-opted Members. Claire Brown was also welcomed to her first Board meeting as the Professional Services Member on the Board of Governors.

The Pro-Chancellor reported that Kathie Moore would be retiring from her role as Dean of the School of Social Sciences in August 2019 and would step down from the Board of Governors at that time.

**19.02 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.

The Vice-Chancellor noted that as a member of the Review Panel he could not participate in any discussions in relation to the potential outcomes of the Fees and Funding Review of Post-18 Education.

Claire Brown noted that she had been involved in the production of the Staff Survey report and presentation (minute reference 19.09).

The Pro-Chancellor declared an interest in relation to the Unconditional Offers report (minute reference 19.11) as his daughter had received an unconditional offer to study at the University.

**19.03 Student Story**

The Board viewed a short film prepared by the School of Science and Technology designed to give Governors a student insight into the University's engineering provision.

**19.04 Minutes**

(a) Minutes of the Previous Meeting

Minutes of the previous meeting held on 27 November 2018 (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 its previous meeting. All action points had been progressed and resolved.

**19.05 Pro-Chancellor's Update**

The Board received a report (Composite Document C) from the Pro-Chancellor updating members on a number of matters:

Access Agreement 2017/18 Monitoring Return

- A new regulatory requirement had been introduced by the Office for Students (OfS) requiring confirmation that there had been review and oversight by the Board of Governors of the University's compliance with the provisions of the Access Agreement. Given the timescales involved, this matter had been progressed under Chair's action in accordance with the provisions in the Standing Orders. For future years, consideration of the report would be incorporated into the Board meeting cycle;
- The Pro-Chancellor and the Deputy Pro-Chancellor had approved the Access Agreement 2017/18 Monitoring Return (Document C1) for submission to the OfS;

Membership Matters

- The term of office of the Academic Board Member on the Board of Governors was due to expire on 31 March 2019. In the light of forthcoming elections for school and professional service representatives on the Academic Board, a proposal had been approved by the Membership and Nominations Committee and the Academic Board that the post-holder's current term be extended;
- Noting that Kathie Moore would be stepping down from the Board upon her retirement from the University, the Board endorsed the extension of her appointment on the Board of Governors to 31 August 2019. An election for the appointment of a successor would be undertaken in due course; and

Board and Committee Meetings 2019/20

- The proposed schedule for meetings during the 2019/20 academic year was set out in Appendix 2 of the report. Members were invited to contact the Pro-Chancellor or Clerk with any comments or queries.

**IT WAS RESOLVED**

- (i) that the report be received and endorsed;
- (ii) that the Access Agreement 2017/18 Monitoring Return be ratified by the Board of Governors;
- (iii) that the current term of office for the Academic Board Member on the Board of Governors be extended to 31 August 2019; and
- (iv) that the meeting dates for 2019/20 be noted.

**19.06 Vice-Chancellor's Update**

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

- The reports and recommendations from the five NTU2025 Lens Programme Boards were due to be reviewed by the University Executive Team shortly. A report was also being prepared setting out which activities from the current strategy were concluded or no longer relevant, and which should be taken forward into the revised strategy;
- The Board welcomed the depth and breadth of the relationship being forged with the University of Nottingham;
- The key themes arising from the Civic University Commission would be reported to a future meeting of the Board of Governors or integrated into the emerging NTU2025 strategy for discussion;
- The Chief Operating Officer and Registrar advised that the outcome of the Fees and Funding Review of Post-18 Education was awaited. As a member of the Panel, the Vice-Chancellor had not participated in any discussions internally on this matter. The University was modelling a range of scenarios based on anticipated outcomes. Whilst there were anticipated to be opportunities given the University's commitment to technical education and level 4 and 5 provision, a review of the cost base, efficiency targets and capital plan had also been undertaken in order to be able to adapt to a range of potential outcomes; and
- Whilst cognisant of the potential risk of funding reductions in the future, it had been considered important to avoid undue focus on this and risk restricting aspirations and engagement of both colleagues and students with the development of the NTU2025 Strategy. It was noted that the major areas of focus of the new Strategic Plan would be presented at the Board meeting in May, with discussions relating to the outcomes of the Lens Programme Boards scheduled for the evening before.

**IT WAS RESOLVED**

that the report be received and endorsed.

**19.07 Nottingham Trent Students' Union President's Update**

The Board received a report (Document E) from the President of Nottingham Trent Students' Union (NTSU) on academic matters and the wider student experience. The following matters were highlighted:

- The election process for the NTSU Executive Officers for the 2019/20 academic year would commence shortly;
- The NTSU President was working with the NTU2025 Project Director on the most effective means of sharing the student vision developed to inform the University's new strategy; and
- The Clifton NG11 Foodbank had been selected by the NTSU as its RAG charity for 2019.

**IT WAS RESOLVED**

that the report be received and endorsed.

**19.08 Creating the University of the Future: Deep Dive into Connecting Globally**

The Board received and considered a report (Document F) and presentation from the Pro Vice-Chancellor (International) and Head of College (Business, Law and Social Sciences). Progress on the actions associated with the Connecting Globally theme of the University's Strategic Plan was outlined. The following matters were highlighted:

*[The remainder of this minute note has been redacted due to its confidential nature.]*

**IT WAS RESOLVED**

that the report be received and endorsed.

**19.09 Staff Survey**

The Board received and considered a report (Composite Document G) and presentation from the Director of Human Resources which provided an overview of the results of the University-wide staff survey.

*[The remainder of this minute note has been redacted due to its confidential nature.]*

**IT WAS RESOLVED**

that the report be received and endorsed.

**19.10 Student Recruitment**

The Board received a report (Document H) in relation to student recruitment. The Chief Operating Officer and Registrar reported that the recruitment position for 2018/19 was positive across all recruitment categories.

The University's position in relation to home/EU undergraduate applications for 2019/20 entry was positive, with applications approximately 11% higher year-on-

year; the sector overall and competitors were noted to be holding steady. The University's conversion rate from applications to acceptances was also significantly higher than the previous year and a number of initiatives were in place to improve this further.

**IT WAS RESOLVED**

that the report be received and endorsed.

**19.11 Unconditional Offers**

The Board received a report (Document I) from the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic and Student Affairs) in relation to the use of unconditional offers by the University. The following matters were highlighted during discussion:

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

- NTU's approach had been to use unconditional offers to improve the quality of applicants;
- The University was monitoring the academic performance of those students given unconditional offers in the 2017/18 academic year. These data and feedback gathered from the students would be used to inform future decision-making in relation to the offer strategy for the 2020 recruitment cycle;
- The NTSU President confirmed that he was satisfied that sufficient support was available to all students to succeed in their studies. Schools were particularly monitoring those students recruited with an unconditional offer to ensure that they obtained any support required; and
- Further discussion regarding the use of unconditional offers within the 2020 recruitment strategy would be targeted for the July meeting of the Board when firmer data would be available in respect of the 2017/18 cohort reaching the end of its second year.

**IT WAS RESOLVED**

- (i) that the report be received and endorsed; and
- (ii) that a report be presented to the Board in July 2019 to enable further discussions on the use of unconditional offers for the 2020 recruitment cycle ahead of UET finalising the offer strategy for NTU in September 2019.

**19.12 Maintaining Degree Standards**

The Board received a report (Document J) in relation to the University's approach to ensuring that the standards of its awards are maintained and the possibilities of grade inflation are minimised. The following matters were highlighted:

- There had been some concerns raised within government and the media regarding standards of degree awards being eroded across the sector. This matter was being addressed by the UK Standing Committee on Quality Assessment (UKSCQA) which provided sector-oversight of HE quality assessment arrangements. The Chief Operating Officer and Registrar was noted to be a member of the UKSCQA;

- The Academic Board had delegated responsibility for the framework governing assessments to the Academic Standards and Quality Committee (ASQC) which had established an Assessment Steering Group to oversee this activity;
- There had been significant developments to safeguard standards over recent years and the University had moved to a 'grade-based' approach to assessment which had been welcomed by students (as evidenced in the National Student Survey results). The University had moved to a linear grading scale instead of percentages which removed inflationary factors and encouraged markers to use the whole scale. This would be used for the first time for those students graduating in summer 2019. In addition, the University had removed exam board discretion to provide greater consistency of practice and also improved the rigour of the algorithm used to calculate student awards;
- The University had recently presented its work in respect of maintaining degree standards to UUK representatives;
- The proportion of 'good' degrees (those with either a First or Upper Second classification) awarded by the University had increased over the past ten years, much of which could be explained by improved inputs, including investments in staff and resources;
- It was expected that the new grade based assessment approach would result in a slight decrease in the number of First degree classifications awarded. The Board was advised that the number of "good" degrees awarded by an institution was included as a measure within league tables and accordingly there may be a reduction in these data; and
- An update in relation to degree outcomes would form part of the Standards, Quality and Enhancement Annual Report presented to the Board in November.

**IT WAS RESOLVED**

that the report be received and endorsed.

**19.13 Independent Review of Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework**

The Board received a report (Document K) in relation to the University's provisional response to the consultation on the Independent Review of the Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (TEF) which closed on 1 March 2019.

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic and Student Affairs) reported that data had recently been received in relation to subject-level TEF scores which confirmed that the University was continuing to perform at TEF Gold standard across the majority of its subject areas.

Members were invited to contact the Deputy Vice-Chancellor prior to the submission deadline should they wish to make any specific comments regarding the proposed response.

**IT WAS RESOLVED**

that the report be received and endorsed.

**19.14 Financial Update**

The Board received a report (Document L) from the Director of Finance which provided an update on the current financial position of the University.

The Pro-Chancellor noted that the Strategy, Policy, Finance and Resources Committee had considered the financial update and also discussed the impact of potential increases in employer pension contributions rates for 2019/20 onwards.

**IT WAS RESOLVED**

that the report be received and endorsed.

**19.15 Estates and Facilities Update**

The Board received a report (Document M) from the Chief Operating Officer and Registrar in relation to campus developments, including revisions to the University's Capital Plan for the period to 2024/25.

It was reported that the major construction projects at both the Clifton and Brackenhurst campuses were progressing well and on programme.

The Pro-Chancellor noted that the Strategy, Policy, Finance and Resources Committee had discussed estates matters in detail and had also considered and approved the modifications to the projects and re-phasing of the capital plan to enable the University to remain within the financial envelope previously agreed by the Board.

**IT WAS RESOLVED**

- (i) that the report be received and endorsed; and
- (ii) that the Board approve the modifications to the projects and the re-phasing of the plan to enable the University to remain within the financial envelope agreed previously by the Board of Governors.

**19.16 Academic Governance and Assurance**

**(a) Report from the Academic Board**

The Board received a report (Composite Document N) from the Academic Board Member in relation to the meeting of the Academic Board held on 30 January 2019.

In addition to the items noted within the report, the Academic Board had also been advised of the ongoing developments in respect of the University's distance learning provision and had welcomed the increase in recruitment to the Wiley online courses.

Discussions had also taken place in relation to unconditional offers and the Academic Board had been supportive of the approach taken by the University.

**IT WAS RESOLVED**

that the report be received and endorsed.

(b) NTU Standards, Quality and Enhancement Annual Report 2017/18

The Board received a report (Composite Document O) in relation to an addendum to the NTU Standards, Quality and Enhancement Annual Report 2017/18 endorsed at the previous meeting of the Board. The addendum reflected the consideration of module failure and postgraduate progression and achievement data which were not available for the previous meeting, together with the additional associated actions within the Action Plan.

The report provided assurance to the Board that appropriate and robust academic governance arrangements were in place.

**IT WAS RESOLVED**

that the report be received and endorsed.

(c) University Research Degrees Committee Annual Report 2017/18

The Board received a report (Composite Document P) in relation to the University Research Degrees Committee Annual Report 2017/18.

In the future, the URDC report would feed into the annual academic quality report presented to the Board in November.

**IT WAS RESOLVED**

that the report be received and endorsed.

(d) Quality Assurance Processes

The Board received a presentation from the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic and Student Affairs) in relation to the University's quality assurance processes. The following matters were highlighted:

- The Board was required to confirm annually that the University has achieved continuous improvement of the student academic experience and outcomes, has provided evidence to ensure that these are robust and appropriate, and that standards of awards are maintained;
- The changes in the regulatory landscape were reviewed noting that the OfS was focused primarily on student participation, experience and outcomes;
- The Quality Assurance Agency had been appointed by the OfS as the statutory quality body and had developed the revised UK Quality Code for Higher Education;
- The University was subject to various forms of external and internal review, including Periodic School Reviews, course development and external examiner reports;
- Communication with students was a key focus for the University, working with the NTSU to drive engagement. Feedback to students on how their voice has influenced change had been well received. Students were also encouraged to complete the National Student Survey (NSS) and Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES); and

- Ongoing developments in respect of assessment and graduate outcomes had been discussed earlier in the meeting.

**IT WAS RESOLVED**

that the presentation be received and endorsed.

The Board thanked the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic and Student Affairs) for her various presentations and reports over the last two days.

**19.17 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 29 January 2019 (Document Q).

The Committee had considered a number of reports including a proposal to re-appoint KPMG for the provision of external audit services to December 2019, pending a tender process to appoint a successor firm in Autumn 2019.

**IT WAS RESOLVED**

that the recommendations outlined within the minutes be approved and endorsed.

(b) Strategy, Policy, Finance and Resources Committee

The Board noted the unapproved draft minutes of the meeting of the Strategy, Policy, Finance and Resources Committee held on 29 January 2019 (Document R).

(c) Employment Policy Committee

The Pro-Chancellor updated the Board on discussions at the meeting of the Employment Policy Committee held on 11 February 2019. The Committee had received reports in relation to a number of matters including a detailed presentation on the results of the staff survey, a report on pay and performance progression and had been impressed by the rigour of the new appraisals process.

**19.18 Application of the Corporation Seal**

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

**19.19 Date of Next Meeting**

It was noted that the next meeting of the Board of Governors would take place on Tuesday 14 May 2019 at the City campus. This would be preceded by presentations and dinner on Monday 13 May 2019.

Rebecca Jenkyn, Clerk to the Board  
February 2019