

## STRATEGIC PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE

9 June 2025 in room 209, Sutherland Building, City Campus West

### CONFIRMED SUMMARY MINUTES

**Contact Georgina Bailes, [georgina.bailes@northumbria.ac.uk](mailto:georgina.bailes@northumbria.ac.uk). Secretary to the Board of Governors, with any queries about these Summary Minutes.**

Present: Dr S Fancey (Chair), Dr R Blackman-Woods, K Fawcett, I McCrory, A Parker [to minute SPC24/30], J Thompson,  
 Apologies: Prof A Long  
 Secretary: G Bailes and B Lenney (Assistant Secretary)  
 In attendance: L Bracken [to minute SPC24/30], M Charlton [SPC/35 – SPC/36], M Foalle [to minute SPC24/30], Prof T Lawson, L Mayfield [SPC/35 – SPC/36], D Monnery, J Taylor [to minute SPC24/30], P Steadman [SPC/35 – SPC/36], Prof G Wynn

#### MAIN ITEMS DISCUSSED/DECIDED ON AT THE MEETING

1. **Declarations of Interest** [Oral Report]  
 There were no declarations of interests in any items on the Agenda.  
  
**Vice-Chancellor's Horizon Scanning** [Oral Report]  
 The Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive provided an update on national, regional and local developments and their potential implications for Northumbria. The latest financial sustainability report from OfS found a worsening sector-wide financial performance but less evidence of over-optimistic future projections, Northumbria remained in a comparatively good financial position, but must continue to plan prudently to ensure long-term stability. The Government's anticipated White paper on immigration was published on 12 May and included some recommendations which would have profound implications for Universities, which the University would continue to monitor. Following the Supreme Court ruling on the definition of women for the purposes of the equality act, the University had set out a statement regarding the ruling on its EDI intranet pages conveying that it continued to emphasise its absolute commitment to creating a community in which all colleagues and students feel safe to express their identity. The recent report from the UUK Transformation and Efficiency Taskforce emphasised that UK universities were facing acute financial pressure and ultimately called for a new collaborative model to enable sustainable transformation that aligned university capacity with national priorities. The Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive recently gave evidence to the House of Lords Social Mobility Committee where discussions focused on barriers to social mobility in the North East. Work on data and systems changes, and estates considerations required to support the new academic structure was on going. Professor Glyn Howatson would take the role of Deputy Chair of UoA 24 for REF 2029, Professor Matt Kiernan, Director of The Northern Hub for Veterans and Military Families Research at Northumbria University had been shortlisted for 'Inspiration of the Year' in the British Forces in Business Awards 2025. **The Committee noted the update**
2. **Strategic Discussion Items**  
  
**University Strategy 2024-30 Strategic Ambition Deep Dive: Creating New Knowledge** [SPC24/30]  
 The Committee considered the performance deep dive into the Creating New Knowledge Strategic Ambition which noted that a step change in the quality of research being delivered at Northumbria could be evidenced. The University was delivering the ambitious targets for growth in research outputs, impact and research grant and contract income (RGCI) set out in the Strategy and was on target for the current

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|    | <p>year and the next two years for RGCI. Knowledge Exchange delivered multiple benefits for the institution including securing income, translating knowledge into practice and delivering positive outcomes. The University had established new priorities for Knowledge Exchange and new ways of working to deliver those and progress was steady on quality research outputs for REF 2029. Strong progress was being made on the University's Research Strategic Delivery Plan - strengthening researcher development, research group leadership, and institutional alignment through targeted support and strategic investment. The University's Knowledge Exchange ecosystem was being strengthened through new governance structures, clear strategic direction, and targeted investment. <b>The Committee thanked the presenters and the wider team for the rich and comprehensive Deep Dive presentation and commended the clear and communicative data reporting style. The Committee noted that that the University was confident that it was on the right trajectory of progress for REF2029, that the University's response to the potential risks associated with the changes and demands of the new REF would be considered at future meeting of Audit Committee and that a recent SMG discussion had taken place exploring the potential risks around the new People, Culture, Environment element of REF2029. The Committee requested that Student Enterprise be added to the 2025/26 schedule for Pre-Board visits, to include conversations with students around the support they receive.</b></p> <p><b><u>Strategic Partnerships and Relationships</u> [SPC24/31]</b></p> <p>The Committee considered the report on current University strategic partnerships and opportunities to grow new external relationships and partnerships to support Northumbria's Strategic Ambitions. Since the update to the Committee in November 2024, there had been a deepening engagement with the North East Combined Authority (NECA) around key strategic and sectoral developments, including influencing of the new Local Growth Plan. The regional HE collaboration, Universities for NE England (UNEE), was launched in November and business partnerships continued to grow in collaborative research, apprenticeships, experiential learning, philanthropy and curriculum development. <b>The Committee noted the report, noting that it was incredibly positive to see so many developments within the region and the University played an enhanced civic role, particularly through its involvement in conversations around local skills needs, which reflected its Strategic Ambitions.</b></p>                                                                                                                                      |
| 3. | <p><b><u>Performance Monitoring</u></b></p> <p><b><u>Student Experience and Learning Outcomes – Q3 2024/25</u> [SPC24/32]</b></p> <p>The Committee considered an update on Student Experience and Learning Outcomes, providing an overview of ongoing initiatives, performance metrics, and recent developments, along with reporting of key data sets from the 2024/25 academic year and an analysis of student withdrawals. Student attendance had continued a trend of improvement in 2024/25 for the third successive year with the average attendance % equal to or higher than the 2023/24 academic year in 21 out of 22 teaching weeks, the National Student Survey (NSS) 2025 opened nationally on 8 January 2025 and closed at midnight on 30 April 2025, and following a year-on-year increase over the previous three years, the volume of formal complaints in 2023/24 had reduced slightly. 28% of all formal complaints were submitted by Boundless Learning students, with an otherwise relatively proportionate distribution of formal complaints across faculties/areas. <b>The Committee noted the summary, received assurances that an action plan had been requested from Boundless Learning in order to address the increased level of complaints from students on those programmes, and noted that the direction of travel for student retention and engagement remained an encouraging picture.</b></p> <p><b><u>Annual Quality and Standards Report 2023/24</u> [SPC24/33]</b></p> <p>The Committee considered the Academic Quality and Standards report for 2023/24 which focused on the key activities providing assurance over the OfS Quality and Standards (B) Conditions of Registration as part of the Board of Governors' role in ensuring the University's compliance with all Conditions of Registration. The B3 condition included a set of numerical thresholds (minimum requirements) which all providers were required to deliver in relation to the outcomes of their students and Northumbria was below the threshold in two out of 48 areas. <b>The Committee endorsed the report for submission to Board of Governors on 30 June, subject to the inclusion of the additional assurance around the University's compliance with the OfS B conditions and its response to areas that were below threshold.</b></p> <p><b><u>Access and Participation Plan (2024/25-2027/28)</u> [SPC24/34]</b></p> <p>The Committee considered the Access and Participation Plan (2024/25-2027/28). In 2023, Northumbria joined the OfS pilot for new Access and Participation Plans (APPs) as part of a revised approach to enhancing equality of opportunity in English higher education. The new APPs emphasised a comprehensive strategy that focused on fair access, and student success and progression, and a core</p> |

element of the new regulatory framework was understanding the impact of the University's activity and improving sector knowledge of what works through the publication of the framework. **The Committee endorsed the Access and Participation Plan 2024/25 – 2027/28 for submission to Board of Governors on 30 June.**

**Sustainability League Table Performance Review** [SPC24/35]

The Committee considered the Sustainability League Table Performance Review. The University aimed to have a strong and sustainable global presence, and to have a positive, lasting impact on environmental sustainability. In 2023/24, Northumbria achieved its highest ranking to date in both the People and Planet League and Times Higher Education Impact Leagues, achieving 10th out of 153 national universities (Top 6.6%) and being categorised as a 1st Class University in People and Planet. In THE Impact, the University was ranked 48th out of 2,152 global universities (Top 2.3%) and 10th in the UK. Although the University's scores in nearly all sections of the QS World Sustainability Rankings had increased in 2024, the increased number of entrants caused the University's ranking to slip slightly to 202nd, though this was still a rise to the Top 11.6%. **The Committee noted the report and commended the University's progress in the People and Planet League and Times Higher Education Impact Leagues.**

**Carbon Management Annual Report 2023/24 Review** [SPC24/36]

The Committee considered the Carbon Management Annual Report 2023/24 report 2023-24 detailing progress towards the University's 2030 carbon reduction target and 2040 Net-Zero target, as set in the 2020-2030 Carbon Management Strategy which committed to the achievement of Net Zero Carbon by no later than 2040. Significant investments in key University buildings over the next five years would be the primary strategy for reducing Scope 1 and 2 GHG emissions. A Sustainability Strategy would be developed to be considered by the University Executive later in academic year 2024/25. **The Committee noted the report.**

Beth Lenney  
Assistant Secretary to Strategic Performance Committee  
June 2025