

NORWICH UNIVERSITY OF THE ARTS

COUNCIL

Minutes of the Council

Held on Friday 22 March 2019 in the Conference Room, Frances House.

Present

Mr A McMenemy (Chair)
Prof. J Last (Vice Chancellor)
Ms C Amor
Prof. Lady R Cooper
Ms C Coleman
Ms A Ferguson
Mr A Grimby
Mr M Jeffries (with the exception of estate matters under Item 3.1)
Ms A Johns
Ms H Lindsell
Mr P Norton
Mr J Smith

Dr W Thomson
Mr T Wood

Apologies

Ms N Nannar
Mr I Watson
Prof. H Carlisle

In attendance

Prof. N Powell
Mrs A Robson
Prof. R Sawdon-Smith
Ms A Tubb
Mr D Williams (Clerk)

INTRODUCTION AND WELCOME

The Chair welcomed all attendees, and extended a warm welcome to the two new governors – Ms Amor and Ms Ferguson – who were attending their first meeting of Council.

PRESENTATION FROM SIMON WILMOTH ON THE RESEARCH EXCELLENCE FRAMEWORK (REF)

Mr Wilmoth updated members on the Research Excellence Framework (REF). The results of the next REF would be released in 2021, with deadline for institutional submissions being 2020. Mr Wilmoth outlined how research would be assessed and the grading of research outcomes. The University's preparation of its REF submission was on-going. The work was being assisted by an external adviser who have been a panel member for the previous REF assessment. Although too early to make a detailed assessment, it was anticipated that the University would include a larger number of staff in its 2020 submission, than for the previous REF.

An update on progress in preparing for the REF would be provided to the next meeting of the Council.

Vice Chancellor

The Chair thanked Mr Wilmoth for his presentation

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies had been received from Ms N Nannar, Mr I Watson and Prof. H Carlisle.

1. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

Subject to amending to 1 July 2019 the starting date for Dr Thomson's new position of employment, the Board approved the minutes of the meeting held on 16 November 2018.

The Chairman signed the minutes as the formal record of the meeting.

2. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

Item 3.1 Additional policy updates – early in the new calendar year the Chair had emailed members on developments in higher education.

Item 3.3 The Vice Chancellor was actively considering what might be an appropriate key performance indicator (KPI) for graduate salaries.

3. VICE CHANCELLOR

3.1 Vice Chancellor's report to Council: update on institutional process

The Vice Chancellor (VC) provided an update to Council.

Press comments on the low average salaries for the University's graduates had raised concerns. Typical salary levels in the region's labour market were low, and an over-supply of arts graduates nationally made the issue difficult to address. To provide greater support for the employability of its graduates, the University was working to reformulate aspects of its course curriculum. The work on the employability, included helping students to recognise the transferable skills, as well as the specialist skills, they gained during their time at the University.

The position with regard to the Augar Review remained unchanged. Given the current circumstances surrounding BREXIT, the timelines for the publication and implementation of the review remained unclear.

Data on degree classifications published by the Office for Students (OfS) had shown the proportion of first class degrees awarded by the University was above the number expected. The University had initiated a review of its assessment processes to ensure that there were no issues requiring attention.

The University had noted a lack of sustained and serious engagement by a small number of students with their studies. In response the University was preparing to strengthen its policy on attendance. The enforcement of the policy could adversely affect student retention, which was currently at a very high level.

Details of the new Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF) had been released. The clustering of institutions for the purposes of assessment, took no account of the fact that some institutions had received Higher Education Innovation Funding (HEIF), and others had not.

The outcomes to the 2018 recruitment cycle showed a continuation of a longer-term trend, which had witnessed the University achieving sustained increases in number of acceptances over a ten-year period. Applications for 2019 entry were sound. It was anticipated that enrolments would at least match the numbers on which next year's financial projections had been modelled.

Mr Jeffries left the meeting.

The Deputy Vice Chancellor updated Council on progress in developing the University's Riverside site.

Mr Jeffries re-joined the meeting.

The development of Big White Wall (BWW) offering support for students with common mental health project was discussed.

The University had received a large donation from Karsten Schubert. On behalf of the Council the Chair had written to Mr Schubert thanking him for his generosity.

The Chair thanked the VC for his report.

3.2 Access Monitoring Return

The Office for Students (OfS) had introduced the requirement that the provider's accounting office (in NUA's case the Vice Chancellor) should confirm that the governing body had monitored the University's compliance with its access agreement for that year. The return included data on the University's access targets and the outcomes achieved. The expectation was that henceforth the Access Monitoring Return would be reviewed annually by the governing body. The Council noted and approved the Access Monitoring Return for 2017-18.

3.3 Key performance indicators (KPIs)

Council received an update of the institution's KPIs. The updates to a number of the KPIs was noted. It was expected that the indicators for knowledge exchange would require amendment following the implementation of the new KEF. Council noted the report in the KPIs.

3.4 Senate (Annual Monitoring Meeting)

The Annual Monitoring Meeting of Senate was a key part of the University's quality assurance and improvement processes. The OfS required the governing body to assured itself that the University was taking appropriate steps to improve the students' academic experience and outcomes.

The Chair suggested that Council might consider how continuous improvement is measured, and whether the measures used by NUA are comparable to those found in other institutions?

The documentation placed before Council provided evidence that the processes used by the University were similar to those applied by other higher education providers, and that the process had been rigorous. For instance, the external examiners reports confirmed that the University's standards were comparable to those found in other similar providers.

Council explored a number of aspects of documentation, including how the student voice was captured and the use of the assessment of learning, and, in particular, the role of formative assessment.

It was noted that the OfS were particularly interested in ensuring providers satisfied Condition B3 of the registration process. I.e. the provider must deliver successful outcomes for all of its students, which are recognised and valued by employers and/or enable further study.

It was noted that the process of gaining assurance needed to respect the distinction between governance and the operation of the University – the latter being a management responsibility. The governing body should avoid becoming deeply involved in the details of the assurance processes.

To assist members' understanding of academic assurance and the processes of continuous improvement, it would be helpful if a summary of the University's processes could be attached to the future reports on academic monitoring.

Vice Chancellor

The Minutes of the meeting of Senate held on 5 December 2018 were noted.

3.5 Senate

The Minutes of the meeting of Senate held on 27 February 2019 were noted.

4. STUDENT MATTERS**4.1 Students' Union Report**

The Students' Union (SU) President introduced the report on the activities of the Students' Union. The activities had included holding a highly successful Christmas market, to be followed in April by a larger Spring Market, and by a 'You Said, We Did' campaign. During the period covered by the report three new student societies had been established. The Students' Union was also seeking to become a member of the British Universities and Colleges Sports (BUCS) organisation.

The Students' Union President updated Council on the 2019/20 Presidential election. The current President had been re-elected and would serve for a further term of one year. The Council offered their congratulations to the President on her re-election.

4.1 Amendment to Students' Union constitution

To reflect the growth of year zero courses, the Students' Union were seeking to amend the membership of the Union's Steering Committee. The proposal was to increase the number of representatives from year zero courses on the Steering Committee from 1 to 2. Council approved the amendment to the Students' Union constitution.

5. REPORT FROM AUDIT COMMITTEE**5.1 Unconfirmed minutes of the meeting held on 22 February 2019**

The Chair of Audit introduced the minutes of the meeting.

The meeting had considered a number reports from the internal auditors, including Tier 4 Visa requirements and Cyber Security. The Committee had also received confirmation from the Internal Auditors that management had fully implemented the actions agreed followed previous work undertaken by the internal auditors. The progress made had been very pleasing. The Committee also considered those risks judged to be low likelihood, but high impact. Finally, the Committee had reviewed the work of the Donations Committee and the acceptance of a large donation offered to the University.

6. REPORT FROM THE FINANCE AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE**6.1 Report of the meeting held on the 1 March 2019**

The Chair of Finance and Resources committee introduced the minutes and the Finance Report, drawing Council's attention to:

- the presentation made to the Committee by the Director of Innovation and Engagement; updating the Committee on the work of the Ideas Factory
- the return submitted by the University to the higher education business interaction survey (HEBCI)
- the revised surplus for the current year as detailed in the Finance Report, and the prudent assumptions underpinning the outcomes modelled for future years
- the anticipated changes to the University's cash reserves as a result of the implementation of its agreed capital investment strategy, noting that

despite the use of internal resources to fully fund the capital expenditure the balance sheet would remain strong

- changes to the Treasury Policy, ensuring a balance between risk and return, and increasing the amount that could be placed on deposit with one bank or building society from £2M to £6M.

7. NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE

7.1 Oral report of the meeting held on the 22 March 2019

The Chair of the committee provided an oral report of the meeting, held immediately prior to the meeting of the Council.

The minutes of the meeting would be considered at the July meeting of the Council.

7.2 Determination of membership numbers

The Committee was recommending an increase in the number of independent members from 11 to 13 for 2019/20. This would assist with the staffing of the Council's committees.

The Committee was recommending that all other categories of membership for 2019/20 should remain unchanged.

The size of the Council would increase from 16 to 18.

Council approved the membership numbers for 2019/20.

8. COUNCIL MATTERS

8.1 Update from the Chair

There were no further updates from the Chair.

9. PRESS COVERAGE

The contents of the press and publicity pack were noted.

10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There were no matters of any other business.