

## NORWICH UNIVERSITY OF THE ARTS

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### COUNCIL

#### Minutes of the Council

Minutes of the meeting of Council held using Microsoft Teams on Friday 13 November 2020, commencing at 13.00.

**Present:**

Mr A McMenemy (Chair)  
 Ms C Bray  
 Ms R Chakraborty  
 Prof. Lady R Cooper  
 Ms A Ferguson  
 Mr A Grimby  
 Mr M Jeffries  
 Ms A Johns  
 Ms S Kennedy  
 Ms N Lanzalaco  
 Prof. J Last  
 Mr D Lawford  
 Mr J Smith  
 Mr I Watson

Mr T Wilson  
 Mr T Wood

**In attendance:**

Mrs A Beckett  
 Prof. H Carlisle  
 Prof. N Powell  
 Mrs A Robson  
 Prof. R Sawdon-Smith  
 Ms S Steed (Presentation only)  
 Mr D Williams (Clerk)

**Apologies:**

Ms C Armor  
 Ms N Nannar

#### **PRESENTATION FROM SARAH STEED, DIRECTOR OF INNOVATION AND ENGAGEMENT**

The Director of Innovation and Engagement provided an update on the University's work to support student employability. Council received information about the support offered to students across the three years of their undergraduate degree; data on current salary levels of NUA graduates; the proportion of students gaining "high skills employment"; and differences in regional salary levels when compared to London. The current conditions in the labour market were also discussed.

Work was being undertaken to address the key barriers to improving employability, including building the "confidence, resilience and ambition" of students.

The Chair thanked the Director of Innovation and Engagement for her presentation. Members were encouraged to contact the Director of Innovation and Engagement by email if they had any further observations or questions about student employability.

#### **Council Members**

#### **CHAIRMAN'S OPENING REMARKS**

The Chair opened the meeting by drawing members' attention to two items. Firstly, congratulations were extended to Ms A Tubb, for recently having become Mrs A Beckett. Secondly, this was the final meeting for Professor Neil Powell, Pro Vice Chancellor, who would shortly be retiring from the University's employment. The Vice Chancellor (VC), Acting Vice Chancellor (AVC) and Chair of the Council lead tributes to the work and achievements of Professor Powell during his 15 year career with the University.

**1. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING**

The Council approved the Minutes of the meeting held on 02 October 2020.

**2. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

There were no matters arising.

**PART 1****3. VICE CHANCELLOR****3.1 Vice Chancellor's Policy Update**

The VC provided an update on the external operating environment for the University.

Noting that it would impact the University's current recruitment processes, Council's attention was drawn to national discussions on introducing a Post Qualification Applications (PQA) system.

The government had issued guidance on a move to online teaching for the last week of term and the timing of student travel home for Christmas. The extended length of the Christmas break would increase the risk of students not returning to re-commence their students in the New Year.

The indications were that the government was focussing on the expansion of further education as a means of moving demand away from higher education, and thinking in terms of courses of shorter duration.

Policy developments were also expected to affect the future student "supply chain". These included the recent removal of bursaries for those seeking to train as teachers of art and design. Such developments were likely to affect adversely the future numbers of students studying creative subjects.

Council received information about the new metric, Start2Success, being developed by the Office for Students (OfS).

The Chair thanked the VC for his report, which Council received.

**3.2 Acting Vice Chancellor's report**

The AVC updated Council on the operation of the University during the autumn term, including the deployment of the hybrid delivery model by the University.

Following new government guidance, the final week of the autumn term would be delivered fully on-line. Face-to-face teaching sessions previously planned for the final week had been brought forward, ensuring there was no backlog of sessions at the start of spring term.

Council noted the changes to the University's staffing establishment, including the increased number of part-time technicians to enable access to studios and workshops on Saturdays.

Numbers of students diagnosed with Covid-19 or self-isolating remained low. Council were informed about the support available to students who were self-isolating. This covered both practical and emotional support.

The National Student Survey (NSS) was discussed. The NSS was currently being reviewed by the OfS. The University had responded to an OfS questionnaire, indicating that while the NSS was imperfect, it did provide useful data and insights.

The latest NSS data for Norwich, highlighted the continuing need to improve “organisation and management”. The University had investigated the problem in detail. The poor score in 2019 reflected in-year changes to course delivery as well as “local” factors, including changes to the staffing base for individual courses.

The very low level of complaints made against the University, with no complaints currently being processed by the institution’s formal internal processes, was noted.

The Chair thanked the AVC for her report, and on behalf of Council expressed thanks to all staff for the excellent outturn to student recruitment over the summer and for successfully adapting course delivery in the face of the Covid-19 pandemic.

### **3.3 Strategic Plan**

Council received the Strategic Plan and the draft associated action plan.

There was a high-level of uncertainty as to the future shape of the external operating environment. The plan was therefore for a limited duration of three years.

The plan set out areas of action under the themes of Transformation, Sustainability and Inclusivity and gave staff a mandate to deliver in each of these areas. The plan was for now, and the newly appointed VC would be expected to review strategic direction in due course.

While noting the nature and purpose of the plan, members of Council offered a number of observations. Looking at technology it was important for students to develop the ability and agility to move between software platforms. Equally, the particular contribution of the creative arts in transforming lives could be given more emphasis.

The draft Action Plan contained a large number of actions. Council was reassured that many of the specific actions were already being progressed and the University’s executive team was confident that the plan was achievable over the period.

Noting its nature and purpose, Council approved the Strategic Plan.

### **3.4 Significant risks list**

Significant risks are reviewed twice a year by Council and also examined by the Audit Committee. Council noted the significant risks list.

### **3.5 Council Performance Indicators**

The set of performance indicators had been updated with key metrics following conclusion of enrolment and the financial statements. The dashboard of indicators would be evolved following the approval of a new strategic plan. Council noted the Council’s performance indicators.

**3.6 Senate Minutes**

Council received the minutes of the meeting of Senate held on 14 October 2020.

**4. PRESS****4.1 Press coverage**

A link enabling access to the press coverage had been previously circulated to members.

**5. STUDENT MATTERS****5.1 Students' Union Report**

The President of the Students' Union (SU) highlighted key areas of work undertaken by the Students' Union. These included supporting and reassuring first-year students, as well as those students returning to the University at the start of term. A new development offering further support to students and titled Wellbeing Wednesday was also noted.

The support of the previous president, funded by the University for the autumn term, had been crucial to the students' union being able to meet the needs of students effectively over the period during the pandemic. The President requested additional funding for a second SU post to meet ongoing demands on the union. The University's executive was supportive of a second post within the union and it was agreed that the additional funding for the post should be made available by the University.

**Director of Finance**

**5.2 Financial outturn for 2019/20 and budget for 2020/21**

Council approved the 2020/21 budget for the Students' Union.

**Students' Union President**

The meeting was adjourned for a short, five minute, break

## PART II

**6. CHAIR'S COMMENTS AND ANY OTHER BUSINESS MATTERS****6.1 Chair's update**

Detailing the process to date, the Chair updated Council on the recruitment of a new Vice-Chancellor.

The next meeting of Council was not scheduled to take place until March 2021. To ensure members remained briefed about the University's progress, the Chair and the AVC would circulate periodic updates to members.

Early in the new 2021 calendar year the Chair would contact individual members to discuss their contributions as governors.

**6.2 Any other business requests**

There were no other business requests.

**7. GOVERNANCE AND ASSURANCE MATTERS****7.1 Prevent monitoring report and annual accountability statement**

Council received and approved the report confirming the University's compliance with the Prevent duty during 2019-20 and the Annual Accountability Statement for submission to the OfS.

**Registrar**

**7.2 CUC Higher Education Code of Governance 2020**

As regards the Code's suggestion that consideration should be given to the appointment of a Senior Independent Governor, Council noted that current circumstances did not justify making such an appointment, but the issue should be reconsidered when the role and responsibilities for the Deputy Chair were next reviewed.

**Clerk**

Council noted the report on the revised CUC Code and approved the recommendations.

**7.3 Feedback from governors who attended a recent workshop on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion**

Council received feedback from the two members of the governing body who had recently attended a workshop run by AdvanceHE on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. Data shared at the workshop indicated the very low level of ethnic diversity of governing bodies generally in the HE sector. The higher level of diversity on the governing body at NUA was atypical.

**REPORTS FROM COMMITTEES**

**8. REPORT FROM THE FINANCE AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

**8.1 Unconfirmed minutes of the meeting held on 26 October 2020**

Council received the unconfirmed minutes of the meeting.

**8.2 Finance Report October 2020 – Executive Summary**

Council's attention was drawn to aspects of the University's recent financial performance, including the financial impact of Covid-19, the updated financial outturn for the year, and movements in cashflow. The report was noted.

**9. REPORT FROM JOINT FINANCE AND RESOURCES AND AUDIT COMMITTEE**

**9.1 Unconfirmed minutes of the meeting held on 26 October 2020**

Council received the unconfirmed minutes of the meeting.

**9.2 Commentary on the financial statements 2019/20**

The commentary on the financial statements 2019/20 was noted.

**9.3 External Auditors Report**

The External Auditors had issued a very positive report, which identified, only one very minor matter. No significant adjustments or matters of control had been identified.

An absence of clarity from the OfS as to how higher education providers should be audited in respect of their access and participation spend, had threatened to delay the completion of the audit of the financial statements. This had now been resolved by the OfS issuing further guidance to the sector on materiality levels. As result, the Auditors had been able to complete their work and would be able to sign the financial statements.

**9.4 Financial Statements for NUA 2019/20**

The financial statements for 2019/20 were approved by Council.

**9.5 Management Letter of Representation**

The Management Letter of Representation was approved.

**10. REPORT FROM THE AUDIT COMMITTEE**

**10.1 Unconfirmed minutes of the meeting held on 26 October 2020**

The Council received the unconfirmed minutes of the meeting.

**10.2 Terms of reference**

The terms of reference were approved.

**10.3 Audit Committee Annual Report**

Council's attention was drawn to the positive assessments on the University systems and control made by both the internal and external auditors.

Council received the Audit Committee's Annual Report.

**10.4 Re-Appointment of External Auditors**

Council approved the reappointment of KPMG as the University's external auditors for 2020/21.

**11. REPORT FROM APPOINTMENTS COMMITTEE**

**11.1 Unconfirmed minutes of the meeting held on 21 October 2020.**

Council received the unconfirmed minutes of the meeting.

**12. REPORT FROM REMUNERATION COMMITTEE**

**12.1 Verbal report of the meeting held on 13 November 2020.**

The committee Chair updated Council. The committee had approved the salary range and related benefits, including the relocation allowance, to be offered to the new VC. When the time came, they had also empowered the Chair of the Council to undertake the salary negotiations with the new VC on behalf of the Committee.

**13. CHAIRMAN'S CLOSING REMARKS**

The Chair thanked participants for their attendance and contributions to the meeting.

**14. DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting would commence at 1300 on 26 March 2021. It was expected that the meeting would be held using Microsoft Teams.