

NORWICH UNIVERSITY OF THE ARTS

COUNCIL

Minutes of the Council

Minutes of the meeting of Council held in the Graphics Studio (GU301), Guntons, St Georges Street, Norwich on Friday 02 July 2021, commencing at 09.30.

Present:

Mr A McMenemy (Chair)
 Ms C Armor
 Ms C Bray
 Ms R Chakraborty
 Prof. Lady R Cooper
 Ms A Ferguson
 Mr A Grimby
 Mr M Jeffries
 Ms A Johns
 Ms N Lanzalaco
 Mr D Lawford (by Microsoft Teams)
 Ms A Mound
 Ms N Nannar
 Prof. S Ofield-Kerr
 Mr J Smith

Mr I Watson

Mr T Wilson

Mr T Wood

In attendance:

Prof. L Anderson (to Item 12)
 Ms A Beckett (to Item 12)
 Prof. H Carlisle (to Item 12)
 Mr C Lawrence
 Mrs A Robson (to Item 12)
 Prof. R Sawdon-Smith (to Item 12)
 Mr D Williams (Clerk)

Apologies:

None

CHAIR'S INTRODUCTION AND PRESENTATION

CHAIRMAN'S INTRODUCTION AND WELCOME

The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed participants to the first in-person meeting of the Council since before the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Mr C Lawrence would be joining Council in October 2021, and was in attendance so he could participate in the first part of the discussion on the University's emerging strategy. Mr Lawrence briefed members on his career background.

VICE-CHANCELLOR'S PRESENTATION: NORWICH UNIVERSITY OF THE ARTS – NOW AND IN THE FUTURE

The VC presented to Council outlining his initial thoughts on the strengths of the University; what might need to change; and learning from the management of Covid-19. The VC went on to highlight possible future actions and next steps.

Following the presentation, in break-out groups, members of Council and the Senior Management Team (SMT) considered four questions:

- Has the VC correctly identified our strengths?
- Are the areas for development in tune with sector, national and international priorities?
- Have the right projects been identified for the Autumn?
- What information would you like further information on and to discuss at the Council's next meeting?

After examining each of the questions, the Chairs of the break-out groups provided feedback to the full Council.

Further work on the development of the institution's strategy would cover an assessment of costs and the planned timescales. The aim would be to finalise the strategy before the end of the current calendar year.

Council was adjourned to allow a short refreshment break.

INTRODUCTORY ITEMS

1. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

Subject to adding that Ms A Johns had withdrawn from the meeting for discussion of Item 8.3 Governor Effectiveness Review, the Council approved the Minutes of the meeting held on 26 March 2021.

2. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

There were two matters arising:

Item 7.2 Any other business requests: The Pro Vice Chancellor updated Council on the unsuccessful bid to secure funding to establish a digital hub in the city of Norwich.

Item 8.2 Annual Report on NUA Freedom of Speech Code of Practice: Following the Office for Students (OfS) issuing new guidance to higher education providers, the Registrar confirmed that the University was reviewing its policies on Freedom of Speech.

PART 1

3. VICE CHANCELLOR

3.1 Vice Chancellor's statement

Members of the Council considered the VC's statement.

Members enquired about the planned Graduate Celebration, which was planned to take place in September at the Norwich City football ground. The football ground had been chosen given the flexibility of the space available. This would reduce the risk that the event would need to be cancelled should there be an re-imposition of Covid-19 restrictions.

Details of the staff changes included with VC's statement were noted. The Director of Human Resources, Kate Secker, would be leaving the University on 31 July 2021. Council recorded its thanks to Ms Secker for her work behalf of the University, noting her help and advice in recruiting a new head of institution.

Council received the VC statement.

3.2 Academic Board review

The VC explained the rationale for the proposed changes arising from a review of the workings and membership of Senate. These included replacing the title of Senate by Academic Board, and amending the membership of the body to ensure a clearer separation between the management and academic governance of the University. The proposed membership of the Academic Board would deepen the engagement of staff from across the University.

Implementing the changes would require minor amendments to be made to the University's Instrument and Articles of Government. These would need to be approved by the OfS. This was not expected to be a problem.

Registrar

Council approved the new title and membership of the Academic Board, and the amendments to the University's constitutional instruments.

3.3 Council Performance Indicators

Council reviewed the Performance Indicators. The indicator showing the change in the number of applications to undergraduate programmes for 2021/22 entry had been updated. Although year-on-year applications to undergraduate courses were down 4.3%, the total number of applications was second highest ever achieved by the University.

Applications to the University had been adversely effected by applicants being unable to travel to Norwich for interview, allowing them to meet staff, and see the University and the City. Attendance at open days and for interview was known to had a positive effect on the number of applications received. While the use of on-line recruitment had been successful, it was unable to fully replicate the experience of visiting the University and the City. The year-on-year change in the conversion of applications to offers showed a smaller year-on-year fall in numbers.

Council noted the Performance Indicators

3.4 Significant Risks List

The risk register is considered twice a year by the Audit Committee and Council. Since the risk register had last been considered by the Council, it had been fully updated. The highest risks remained unchanged.

Members noted that in respect of risk F1 Change in government policy or funding, the University's emerging strategy would change the emphasis of mitigating actions from use of cost reduction strategies, to one which included growth of new income streams.

The University confirmed that it had a policy covering sexual assault. The policy was being reviewed following OfS issuing new guidance. As part of the University's response, the relevant student support staff had received additional training. The revised guidance would be placed before Council at a future date.

Registrar

Council noted the Risk Register.

3.5 Senate, 16 June 2021

The Minutes of the meeting of Senate were noted.

The UKSCQA Degrees Outcomes Statement had been updated. Council had approved the previous version in March 2020.

Across the five-year period covered by the Statement, there had been an absence of an upward trend in the percentage of First and Upper Second Class degrees awarded by the University.

If justifiable reasons could be advanced, OfS would accept an increase in the percentage of higher degree classifications awarded by a higher education provider.

Council approved the statement, which would be published on the University's website.

Registrar

Council approved the Annual Report on Research Integrity.

4. PRESS

The press coverage was noted.

5. STUDENT MATTERS

5.1 Students' Union Report

The Students' Union President highlighted key areas of her report to Council.

The Students' Union (SU) priority during the Covid-19 emergency had been to support and help students manage the issues they faced.

The number of nominations to the SU Awards had risen, and a successful award ceremony had been held on 23 June 2021.

The SU President had attended, and spoken on, the student experience at GuildHE's Spring Conference.

The SU President had initiated the formation of a network of small and specialist SUs. The aim of the network was to share best practice and resources. In connection with the development of the network the SU President had visited the SU at the Arts University Bournemouth.

The SU President had attended the National Student Unions (NUS) conference, which had been held on-line.

The SU had appointed a new administrator, who had taken-up their post.

The VC commented he had been impressed by the leadership and work of the SU, which was being achieved with a relatively modest budget. He noted that the SU was an important part of the University's ecology for supporting students, not least during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Council received the report from the SU President.

PART II

6. CHAIR'S COMMENTS AND ANY OTHER BUSINESS MATTERS

6.1 Appointment of Chair designate

The Chair of the Chair's Confirmation Panel updated Council on the panel's work. The Panel had interviewed Mr M Jeffries and was strongly recommending that Mr Jeffries be appointed as the Chair designate. Council approved the appointment of Mr Jeffries as the Chair designate.

6.2 Chair's update

The Chair informed Council that he would be standing down at end of the present calendar year and the November 2021 meeting would be the last scheduled meeting of Council that he would Chair. He noted that the appointment of Mr Jeffries as Chair of Council, would create a vacancy for the appointment of a Deputy Chair.

All independent members of Council were eligible to stand for the position of Deputy Chair. Members interested in being appointed to the position of Deputy Chair were encouraged to discuss the matter with the Chair designate. If they wished to apply for the role they should formally notify the Clerk to the governing body by Wednesday 29 September 2021.

Independent Members

The Chair detailed a number of changes to the membership and officers of the Council's committees, as follows:

Mr A Grimby would move from being a member and Chair of Audit Committee to become a member and Chair of the Finance and Resources (F&R) Committee.

Mr T Wilson would move from being a member of F&R Committee to become a member and Chair of Audit Committee.

Ms A Ferguson would move from being a member of Audit Committee to become a member of the Finance and Resources (F&R) Committee.

Ms C Armor would become Chair of Personnel Committee.

Ms R Chakraborty would become a member of the Remuneration Committee.

Further discussions would take place to finalise the membership of the all of the Council's committees for 2021/22.

6.3 Any other business requests

There were no other business requests.

7. GOVERNANCE AND ASSURANCE MATTERS

7.1 Update on the Governance Effectiveness Review

The Deputy Chair updated Council on the process and selection of an external provider to undertake the Governance Effectiveness Review (GER). After interviewing 3 possible providers, Ms. A Hynes, who had extensive

experience of working with small and specialist institutions, had been selected to undertake the review. The aim would be undertake data collection and analysis for the GER during Autumn 2021, and for a final report to be submitted to Council early in the 2022 calendar year.

REPORTS FROM COMMITTEES

8. REPORT FROM NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE

8.1 Unconfirmed minutes of the meeting held on 26 March 2021.

The Chair highlighted the highly effective role of Nurole in recruiting two new members of Council.

Council received the Minutes of the Nominations Committee.

9. REPORTS FROM THE FINANCE AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

9.1 Unconfirmed minutes of the meeting held on 12 June 2020.

The Chair of the committee drew members attention to the key matters discussed at the meeting. The surplus for 2020/21 was projected to reach £4.16M (16% surplus to income ratio), up from the £3.52M (15%) achieved in 2019/20. The rise in the surplus reflected increased tuition fee income and a reduction in the provision for rent waivers. The second was a consequence of students physically returning to the University earlier than would have been the case had the Covid-19 restrictions remained at a higher level.

The University had received 3 formal requests from students seeking a reduction in their tuition fee as a result of the pandemic. One request had been resolved internally, and the other two had been forwarded to the OfS for review.

A loan rebate had been judged to be the most appropriate way of mitigating the financial impact of the pandemic on students. During the pandemic the University had held discussions with a local Member of Parliament (MP) and with sector bodies, advocating that the government should grant a loan rebate to students. Students had also been encouraged to approach the local MP on the matter.

Ahead of 2021/22 academic year the University had not seen a fall in the demand for student accommodation, and all University-controlled accommodation was now full.

Cash reserves following the funding of Duke Street Riverside remained healthy.

Council approved the budget for 2021/22.

Ahead of the start of the 2021/22 academic year it was important that students expectations were well managed.

The Committee Chair updated Council on the appointment of fund managers. After an extensive tendering process, the University had appointed Aberdeen as its funding managers. The University would initially place £10M with the company to manage on its behalf.

Council received the Minutes of the Finance and Resources Committee.

10. REPORTS FROM THE AUDIT COMMITTEE

10.1 Unconfirmed minutes of the meeting held on 4 June 2021.

The Chair of the committee highlighted a number of items dealt with at the meeting. These included cyber security, KPMG's audit plan and reports from internal auditor. The reports from the internal auditor were highly positive.

The appointment of both internal and external auditors had been subject to a rigorous re-tendering process. The panel overseeing the process had recommended that Scruton Bland should be appointed as the University's internal auditors. The audits would be undertaken by well-qualified staff, who were able to immerse themselves in the University's processes.

The re-tendering process for the external audit had generated very few responses from potential providers. It had been agreed to extend the contract with the University's existing auditors for a further year, and to re-run the tendering process for the external audit in the first half of 2022.

The Minutes of the Audit Committee were received.

10.2 Health and Safety Annual Report

The Chair introduced the annual report on Health and Safety (H&S). H&S was very well-managed by the University and the number of incidents had remained low.

Council noted the H&S annual report.

11. REPORTS FROM THE PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

11.1 Unconfirmed minutes of the meeting held on 14 June 2021.

The Chair of the committee introduced the Minutes.

The human resources (HR) strategy would be revised once the University's corporate strategy was finalised. With the impending retirement of the current Director of HR, the development of the new HR strategy would be led by the incoming Director of HR.

Council was updated on progress in appointing a new Director of HR. Some 40 applications for the post had been received, and the search consultants were working with the University to compile a long-list of candidates. These would be interviewed by the search consultants and then a short-list agreed. Short-listed candidates would be interviewed in mid-August 2021. Based on the applications received, it was anticipated that there would be a strong short-list.

The University confirmed that had been no future progress in reaching a national pay settlement.

Minutes of the Personnel Committee were received.

The Chair of Council informed members of SMT who were in attendance that Ms A Johns and Ms N Nannar were attending their last meeting of the Council and that both had been thanked and presented with gifts at the dinner the night before for members of the Council.

Members of the Executive who were in attendance left the meeting.

12. REPORTS FROM THE REMUNERATION COMMITTEE

12.1 Unconfirmed minutes of the meeting held on 14 June 2021.

The Chair of the Committee highlighted the matters discussed at the meeting. These included the pay award for staff and the bonus to be paid to all established members of staff in recognition of their efforts during the Covid-19 pandemic. The coverage of established staff included fractional posts and those on a substantive part-time contract who had joined the University since July 2020.

12.2 Annual Remuneration Report

Council received the Annual Remuneration Report.

13. CHAIRMAN'S CLOSING REMARKS

The Chair shared with members plans for the Council's next Away Day. As the aim was to focus on developing the University's next strategic plan, there would be no external speaker at the event. Drawing on feedback from the previous Away Day, there would be a members' only private session in the morning at which the University's management would be absent.

The Away Day would be held on the University's campus.

The meeting closed at 13.00