

NORWICH UNIVERSITY OF THE ARTS

COUNCIL

Minutes of the Council

Minutes of the meeting of Council held on Friday 25 March 2022, commencing at 1030 in St Andrews House, Norwich.

Present:

Mr M Jeffries (Chair)
 Ms C Armor
 Ms C Bray
 Ms R Chakraborty
 Prof. Lady R Cooper
 Mr A Grimby
 Prof. S Ofield-Kerr
 Mr K Pink
 Ms N Lanzalaco
 Mr C Lawrence
 Mr J Smith
 Mr I Watson

Mr T Wilson
 Mr T Wood

In attendance:

Prof. L Anderson
 Mrs A Beckett
 Prof. H Carlisle
 Mrs A Robson
 Mr D Williams (Clerk)

Apologies:

Ms A Ferguson
 Ms G Young

CHAIR'S INTRODUCTION AND OPENING REMARKS

The Chairman opened the meeting, and invited the Deputy Vice Chancellor (DVC) to provide an overview of the history and use of St Andrews House, the venue for the meeting. The building had been purchased by the University in 2014, with the in-situ tenants vacating the building in 2018. The internal layout of the ground floor contained space for the students' union, facilities for commuter students and a café. Space on the building's upper floors were allocated to teaching and staff rooms.

Prior to the commencement of the meeting of the Council, members had visited the University's film studios and facilities for communications design, and met with staff and students. Members of Council were highly complementary about the facilities visited and their discussions with staff and students. Members had found the visits very informative and beneficial.

PRESENTATION FROM PROFESSOR SIMON OFIELD-KERR: OPERATIONAL PLAN

The Vice Chancellor (VC) introduced the draft Operational Plan. The Plan detailed the intended actions to enable the implementation of the University's institutional strategy. Comments from members of Council would assist in the completion of the plan.

The University's strategy was ambitious, with the Plan organised around 10 themes. The Plan had been extensively shared and developed with the University's staff. The Plan would run for 5 years, with greater detail being provided in the earlier years.

Additional work was required on some areas to complete the Plan. This included the University's civic role, alumni and partnership working.

The section covering Research and Knowledge Exchange would be populated once the Director of Research and Knowledge Exchange was in post.

The student numbers were probably too high, and would be subject to further consideration. The numbers needed to reflect the changing national demographics, and what might be the appropriate future scale of the University. If NUA's growth in student numbers was below the level secured by its competitors, its market share would fall.

Consideration was also being given to the format, and how best to communicate the Plan once it was complete.

The completed Plan was expected to be based on calendar, rather than academic, years.

The key performance indicators (KPI) would allow the implementation of the University's strategy to be monitored. The KPIs would also inform the risk register.

The key differentiators of NUA's strategy were (1) international recruitment and the associated cultural transformation – the aim being to enable graduates to work anywhere; (2) engagement with industry; and (3) debate – critical engagement in what creativity is about.

One aim was to reduce the University's reliance for recruiting students on its geographical region, and to strengthen NUA's place on the international stage. In parallel and linked to its civic role, the University would support the advancement of the local creative economy: the geographical area currently being a "cold" spot.

Members of Council offered comments for the VC to consider in finalising the Operational Plan. These included placing the operational plan in the context of the University's advancement over the previous 5 years. This would highlight the degree of change and successes previously achieved.

Other matters to be considered when finalising the Plan included the benefits of investing in a regular survey of students to monitor how the changes were impacting students; seeking to capture both the vertical and horizontal dimensions (e.g. themes and strategic developments) of the strategy, and perhaps using a 3 rather 5 year timeline for the Plan.

The Chair thanked Professor Ofield-Kerr for his presentation, noting that it was not the role of Council to become involved in operational detail.

1. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

The Council approved the Minutes of the meetings held on 19 November 2021 and on 11 February 2022.

2. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

There were no matters arising.

PART 1

3. VICE CHANCELLOR

3.1. Vice Chancellor's Report

The resignation of staff, and the challenge of filling vacant posts were discussed. The University was successful in receiving applications for vacant positions, but making appointments was providing more difficult. This was especially true for some vacancies. There were a number of factors responsible.

The need and challenge of increasing the number of applications for places on its courses received by the University was explored. While the ratio of conversations-to-applications was high, the need was to increase the total number of students applying for places at NUA.

Council received an update on the purchase of Bank Plain. The process of removing the two outstanding charges on the property title was on-going. It was anticipated that pending their resolution the University would agree to a conditional exchange of contracts. The time taken to resolve the outstanding issues had delayed the University's entry to the property, and the work required to enable it to make use of the building.

The University had experienced an increase in applications from students for support from the hardship fund. The impact of Covid-19 had reduced the opportunity for students to take part-time employment, while studying at the University. It was anticipated that as the level of activity in the economy increased, the opportunities for those students who needed to support themselves financially would improve. Applications to the hardship might then fall.

The Pro Vice Chancellor (Student Experience) and Academic Registrar briefed Council on the recent inquest for a student who had committed suicide some two years ago. Following detailed questioning, the Coroner appeared satisfied with the level of support offered by the University to the student.

Governors were reminded that in the event they were approached for comment on any event involving the University by the Press they should direct the enquiry to the University's crisis communication team, which comprised the Pro Vice Chancellor (Student Experience) and Academic Registrar and the Director of External Relations. Should such circumstances arise, the Pro Vice Chancellor (Student Experience) and Academic Registrar would provide members with her mobile telephone number to enable governors to contact her.

Pro Vice Chancellor (Student Experience) and Academic Registrar

4. STUDENT MATTERS

4.1. Students' Union Report

The President of the Students' Union highlighted some of the items included in her written report to Council.

Elections for the positions of President and Deputy President of the Students' Union for 2022/23 had taken place. Continuing the trend from previous years, there had an increase in the number of candidates and the number of votes cast. The newly elected President of the Students' Union is Jazz Simpson, and the Deputy President is Nat Dalkiewicz.

5. ACADEMIC GOVERNANCE

5.1. Academic Board, 8 December 2021

The Minutes were received and noted.

5.2. Academic Board, 9 March 2022

The Minutes were received and noted.

5.3. Annual Monitoring: Quality Assurance and Enhancement Framework and Outcomes

The Pro Vice Chancellor (Academic) briefed Council on the changes to the quality assurance and enhancement processes introduced during the current academic year. The new processes underpinned the development of the Quality Enhancement Plan for 2021/22.

The outcomes from the National Student Survey (NSS) had fallen below the institution's targets, but were above the outcomes achieved by its competitors.

The NSS scores were impacted by, for example, ethnic or socio-economic background. These characteristics were reflected in lower NSS outcomes. One of the University's aims was to close these gaps in outcomes. This would assist in improving the University's overall NSS scores.

The report was noted.

The meeting was adjourned for a ten minute break

PART 2

6. GOVERNANCE AND ASSURANCE MATTERS

6.1. Governance Effectiveness Review 2021/22 – executive summary

The executive summary was the final element of the report on review of governance effectiveness, 2021/22.

The Council recorded its thanks to Miss Alice Hynes, who had undertaken the review for the thoroughness of her work. The Chair would write to Miss Hynes to express Council's thanks for her work.

Chair

The report was noted.

6.2. Governance Effectiveness Review 2021/22 – proposed action plan

The Chair of the Governance Effectiveness Review (GER) task group introduced the proposed action plan.

Council approved the proposed plan and suggested that the GER group should meet at a future date to ensure that all the planned actions had been completed.

Chair of GER group

6.3. Schedule of Governor meetings for academic year 2022/23

Subject to increasing the number of meetings of the People Committee from 1 to 3 time a year, the schedule meetings was noted.

Chair of Peoples Committee/PVC (Student Experience) and Academic Registrar

REPORTS FROM COMMITTEES

7. REPORT FROM THE FINANCE AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

7.1 Unconfirmed minutes of the meeting held on 26 March 2022

The Chair of the Finance and Resources drew Members' attention to the following matters:

- the government's response to the Augar Report
- the Financial Strategy, noting that following the adoption of a new institutional strategy plan the strategy would be revised
- the discussion on course costs, acknowledging that financial outcomes were only one of metrics considered when assessing individual courses
- the approval of Financial Regulations, pending further revision following changes to the roles and responsibilities of senior post-holders

Council received the unconfirmed minutes of the meeting.

Since the Committee's meeting the University had agreed the final contract value with the main contractor for the construction of Duke Street Riverside.

7.1. Finance Report February 2021 – Executive Summary

The Finance report was noted.

8. REPORT FROM AUDIT COMMITTEE

8.1 Unconfirmed minutes of the meeting held on 18 February 2022

Council's attention was drawn to the following matters:

- the meeting was the first occasion when the Committee has received reports from the University's recently appointed internal auditors.
- further discussion was on-going on how best to deploy the internal auditors during the forthcoming year. As part of this process the University's spend on internal audit would be benchmarked against other institutions
- compared to the previous year, a larger number of organisations had indicated their interest in tendering to become the University's external auditors.
- Mr T Wood had agreed to join the panel responsible for making recommendations to Council on the appointment of the University's external auditors

Council received the unconfirmed minutes of the meeting.

8.1. US Department of Education loan programme representation and assertion letters

Council noted the signature of the loan programme representation and assertion letters.

9. REPORT FROM THE NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE

9.1. Oral report of the meeting held 25 March 2022

The Chair drew the following to Council's attention

- i. There were no proposed changes to the Committee's terms of reference.
- ii. Ms R Chakraborty had agreed to serve as the Deputy Chair of the Committee.
- iii. Ms C Bray had agreed to join Audit Committee.
- iv. The Committee had reviewed a report on members' attendance at Council and its committee during 2020/21.
- v. Following discussion of the skills register, the Chair would discuss individual members' entries as part of the annual conversations held with each member of the governing body

9.2. Determination of Council numbers for 2022/23

The Committee was recommending to Council an increase of 1 to the total number of members on Council in 2022/23. The increase would enable a second member of Council to be elected by the student body. This was in-line with the recommendation contained in the GER. The size of variable categories would be:

- 13 independent members
- 1 member to the teaching staff nominated by Academic Board

- 2 members elected by the students of the University, one of whom would be the President of the Students' Union
- 3 co-opted members, including one of whom would be a member of the University's professional services staff nominated by Academic Board and one an external member with a background in education

In addition, the VC would be an ex-officio member of the governing body.

There are currently two vacancies for independent members of the governing body.

Council approved the determination of Council numbers for 2022/23.

9.3. Renewals

Council approved the renewal, for a further term of three years, of the following independent member:

- Ri Chakraborty (from 1 October 2022 to 30 September 2025)

10. 10.PRESS

10.1. Press coverage

The press coverage was noted.

11. CHAIRMAN'S CLOSING REMARKS

This was the final meeting of the Council attended by the DVC, Mrs A Robson. On behalf of Council, the Chair thanked the DVC for her work in helping to develop and grow the institution since 2005.

12. DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING

The next meeting would take place on 08 July 2022.