



# University Executive Board

## Minutes

5 November 2024

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**Present:** Professor Jane Norman (Interim Vice-Chancellor and Chair), Sally Blackamore (Finance Director), Professor Mark Bradley (Interim PVC ESE), Helen Dunn (Interim Director of Human Resources), Professor David FitzPatrick (Provost UNM), Dr Paul Greatrix (Registrar), Professor Jeremy Gregory (FPVC Arts and Interim FPVC Social Sciences), David Hill (CDO), Professor Sam Kingman (Interim Deputy Vice-Chancellor), Professor Katherine Linehan (PVC People and Culture), Professor Tom Rodden (PVC RKE), Professor Chris Tuck (Interim FPVC Engineering), Professor Zoe Wilson (FPVC Science)

**In Attendance:** Rowena Hall (Secretary), Rav Kalsi (Principal Executive Officer), Louella Houldcroft (Director of Communications and Advocacy), Jo Simpson (Chief Commercial Officer, for minute 24.148), Rosalie Parkin (Head of Procurement, for minute 24.148), Alice Cooper-Reeve (UNIP CEO, for minute 24.149), Mark Barber (Programme Director, for minute 24.150), Rob Phillips (Programme Manager, for minute 24.150), Carolyn Stanhope (Digital Core Senior Business User for HR, for minute 24.150), Kerry Williamson (Director of Procurement and Financial Operations, for minute 24.150), Angela Macdonald (Associate Director for Risk and Assurance, for minute 24.151), Jenny Vempati (Director of Internal Audit, for minute 24.153), Jason Carter (Deputy Registrar/Director of Governance and Assurance, for minute 24.155), Jon Grainger (Director of Health and Safety, for minute 24.155), Gary Moss (Director of Estates and Infrastructure, for minute 24.155)

**Apologies:** Professor Sube Banerjee (FPVC MHS), Professor Jon Garibaldi (Provost UNNC),

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### 24.144 Welcome, Quoracy and Declarations of Interest

- .1 The Secretary confirmed that the meeting was quorate and there were no declarations of conflict of interest.

### 24.145 Minutes of Meeting on 1 September and Action Log

- .1 The minutes of the meeting held on 1 September (UEB/24/184) were CONFIRMED as a true and accurate record.
- .2 The Action Log had undergone a full review. A number of regular reporting items had been removed and redirected to more appropriate reporting lines.
- .3 Action 22.83.6: The Director of Communications and Advocacy would consider where the Political and Public Affairs report should be directed.

### 24.146 Chairs Business

- .1 The Vice-Chancellor confirmed that she would shortly begin a series of visits to Professional Services departments across the University, starting with Registry and Academic Affairs in November. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor also planned to make a number of visits across the institution.
- .2 The Vice-Chancellor had participated in a Midlands delegation to the Singapore Week of Innovation and Technology together with the Vice-Chancellors of Loughborough and Keele universities to showcase the region's science and innovation strengths to potential investors, government and industry partners in Singapore. This was followed by a trip to Ningbo to UNNC.
- .3 There were discussions about the opportunities for shared services across the higher education sector. The Finance Director reported that a VAT exemption was required to make shared services attractive.



The exemption had been granted for local government and the Russell Group was exploring with the Government whether the exemption could be extended to universities.

**ACTION**

- .4 To meet with the Chief Scientific Advisor for the Department for Business and Trade to discuss investment approaches in the Midlands

**OWNER**

PVC RKE, Director of Communications and Advocacy

**DUE**

31 January

**24.147 National Student Survey Strategy 2024 and Beyond**

- .1 UEB RECEIVED the paper (UEB/24/179) which outlined the University's current National Students Survey (NSS) position and its previous approach to NSS strategy adopted in 2022. The paper summarised a recent internal audit of NSS activity which suggested that the University be more bold and creative in its approach to improving NSS scores.
- .2 The new strategy for 2024/25 as set out in the paper had been considered and APPROVED by the Education and Student Experience Committee.
- .3 The Interim PVC ESE outlined some of the elements of the strategy which included:
- .1 Strengthened governance, priorities and a new RACI matrix with FPVCs (and FAPVs) accountable for academic units and the Academic Registrar accountable for professional services enhancement.
- .2 An updated ESE risk register with new mitigations and controls.
- .3 A NSS mirror survey for all non-final-year undergraduate students to replace NSES for February and March 2025.
- .4 The Interim PVC ESE suggested that Future Nottingham would enable a more transformative approach to improving NSS scores. The Interim Director of Human Resources warned that Future Nottingham would not deliver a step change in NSS scores by itself. However, it did provide the opportunity to consider where resource should be allocated to achieve the best outcome for students. For example, the services delivered at School, Faculty or centrally.
- .5 It was highlighted that the best performing Schools in the NSS did not necessarily have more resource and there was support for the view that higher scores were more attributable to behaviours, culture and mindsets within Schools. The quality of each interaction with students in a School was important.
- .6 There was a consensus that the University's current performance in the NSS was not acceptable. The Russell Group did not perform well in the NSS, therefore a mid-range performance within the Russell Group itself was poor.
- .7 A number of suggestions were made for additional activity to be considered:
- .1 Marketing campaigns around campuses during the NSS period.
- .2 Communication campaigns such as, 'You said, we did'.
- .3 Heads of School should hold clear accountability for the delivery of improved NSS scores and provide effective leadership.
- .4 Departmental champions should be identified to operationalise activity.
- .5 Approaches to incentivising improved team performance in NSS. Poorer performing Schools should not automatically receive additional funding.
- .6 There should be consequences where a School fell below an identified level in its NSS performance.
- .7 The priorities for NSS action should be clearer.



.8 Quality assure the delivery of assessment feedback to support the delivery of timely feedback.

- .8 The Deputy Vice-Chancellor considered that there was no greater priority for the University at the current time than improving its performance in the NSS.
- .9 Whilst UEB ENDORSED the 2024-25 Strategy as outlined in the paper, it considered that more could and should be done at pace to improve the University's performance in the NSS.

#### **24.148 Driving Multi Million Pound Savings through Supplier and Spend Optimisation**

- .1 UEB RECEIVED the paper (UEB/24/173) which proposed an approach to delivering financial savings through a supplier and spend optimisation approach as part of the commercial strategy. It was forecasted that the approach could target a minimum of £5m of savings in the first 12 months.
- .2 The core strands of the approach were outlined:
1. Reducing and eliminating unnecessary spend.
  2. Driving commercial value through inserting an additionality clause in all contracts and tenders.
  3. Driving cost reduction through commercial tension in negotiations.
- .3 The Chief Commercial Officer outlined a number of barriers to success which included the perception that if whole budgets were not spent in year it would be reduced in subsequent years.
- .4 The Finance Director confirmed that Nottingham typically spent more than other universities to deliver equivalent services.
- .5 In answer to a question, the Chief Commercial Officer confirmed that she did not have enough resource to deliver the approach as effectively as it could be, but that she was optimistic that the Target Operating Model would right size the commercial team.
- .6 Planning and Resources Committee would receive monthly reports on the effectiveness of the implementation and adoption of the approach.
- .7 There was strong support for the approach outlined in the paper and it was AGREED by UEB.

#### **24.149 University of Nottingham Innovation Park (UNIP) Strategy**

- .1 UEB RECEIVED the paper (UEB/24/174) which included a copy of the UNIP 2030 Strategy which outlined how the University would establish its own ecosystem of industry focused co-located offerings in each of its campuses. The strategy would focus on UNIP delivering value back to the University and its region.
- .2 The Strategy had been discussed at Research and Knowledge Committee, the Commercial Governance Board and the UNIP Board. It was due to be submitted to the UNIP Board for approval.
- .3 It was recommended that a more explicit reference should be made to the opportunities at the international campuses, in particular at UNNC which had strength in its Innovation Centre.
- .4 UEB had previously understood that the activity as set out in the Strategy was the primary purpose of UNIP. UEB confirmed its support for the Strategy.

#### **24.150 Digital Core – Cutover, Payroll and Training Update**

- .1 UEB RECEIVED the paper (UEB/24/174) which provided an update on the progress of the project as it neared Go-Live



- .2 As Cutover entered week four of six, 61% of cutover activities had been completed. 79 reports in addition to the standard suite of reports had been completed. 26 reports remained in End User Testing from the Day 1 list, and these were being closed day by day. Over 5,000 staff had joined a training session to date.
- .3 UEB NOTED that historic treatment of casual workers was compliant with USS terms and conditions. An extension to casual workers of the benefits of the USS scheme would be in place following Go-Live and eligible staff would be advised of their option to opt out of the scheme.
- .4 Payroll activity continued and the project team was on course to deliver a paper to UEB with a recommendation as to whether the UniCore system should be used for the November payroll.
- .5 UEB was advised that Agresso had been switched off and an emergency payment process was now in place. It was not known how much spend was occurring which staff would apply to claim back as an expense.
- .6 The University would operate a cost centre manager approval approach to the approval of spend within the UniCore system. Until the system was live, it would not be clear whether the levels of spend through different cost centres was manageable relative to the number of cost centre approvers.
- .7 UEB was asked to give consideration to the future business owner of the UniCore system. The owner would prioritise the areas of the system which would receive future investment for development. They would be required to lead a demand forum to manage business requests for development.
- .8 The approach to early life support and escalation would be shared with UEB.
- .9 UEB REAFFIRMED its SUPPORT for the planned Go-Live on 25 November.

#### **ACTIONS**

		<b>OWNER</b>	<b>DUE</b>
.10	To share planned communications to staff with the Director of Communications and Advocacy for review	UEB members	15 November
.11	To determine who should be future business owner of the UNiCore System	Vice-Chancellor	13 December
.12	To share escalation routes and early life support plans with UEB	Programme Director	15 November
.13	To write to the project team to thank them for their continued hard work and support	Principal Executive Officer	15 November

#### **24.151 Strategic Risk Management Update**

- .1 UEB RECEIVED the paper (UEB/24/172) which included a copy of the Strategic Risk Register.
- .2 A risk workshop had been scheduled with the members of Planning and Resources Committee at which consideration would be given to whether the correct risks were included on the Risk Register.
- .3 The ownership for Risk 15 Delivery of Environmental Sustainability Agenda was considered. It was AGREED that the risk would be de-escalated. It would be discussed the next day at the Environmental Sustainability Committee and with the new Director of Environmental Sustainability to determine an appropriate plan.
- .4 The following points were NOTED:
  - .1 Progress on the mitigation of a number of risks had not progressed. An example was the risk related to the Bio-Support Unit and its need for a presence on University Park. The PVC RKE and Director of Governance and Assurance would discuss an action plan to deliver a solution for University Park.



- .2 Mitigation of risk related to the Potential for Non-Compliance with UKVI Regulations remained dependent on the implementation of the SEATs system and a new timetabling system which had been deferred. Further discussion was required outside the meeting to determine a route for progress.
- .3 The inclusion of a risk related to AI should be reconsidered.
- .5 UEB APPROVED the high-level version of the Strategic Risk Register for presentation to Council and the proposal for the governance of the Confidential Risk Register.

ACTIONS	OWNER	DUE
.6 To develop an action plan for the progress of the mitigation of the risk related to the Bi-Support Unit	PVC RKE, Director of Governance and Assurance	13 December
.7 To consider the options for progressing compliance with the risk related to the Potential for Non-Compliance with UKVI Regulations	Director of Governance and Assurance	13 December

#### **24.152 Defence and Dual Use Research – Revised Statement**

- .1 UEB RECEIVED the paper (UEB/24/188) which reminded UEB that at its September meeting it had considered a paper on Defence and Dual Use Research and a draft statement which set out the University's approach to the principle of academic freedom and the due diligence approach and ethical review adopted before any research programmes were accepted.
- .2 A number of suggestions were made at that meeting for amendment to the draft statement and the revised statement was presented to UEB for consideration.
- .3 The draft statement was AGREED. It was NOTED that the statement would be submitted to Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee and Education and Student Experience Committee before submission to Senate for consideration.

#### **24.153 Audit Recommendation Tracking**

- .1 UEB RECEIVED the paper (UEB/24/178) which set out details of outstanding management audit actions in response to audit recommendations.
- .2 UEB NOTED that in recent months there had been a gradual rise in the number of outstanding audit actions with more becoming due before the end of the year.
- .3 UEB members support was requested to reduce the number of outstanding actions. A regular report on progress would be delivered to UEB.

#### **24.154 International Governance Reports – UNNC and UNM**

- .1 UEB RECEIVED and NOTED the regular reports from UNNC (UEB/24/183) and UNM (UEB/24/175).
- .2 The Provost UNM was keen to receive feedback from members on the current format of reporting and whether there were any suggestions for refinement of the reports.

ACTION	OWNER	DUE
.3 To provide feedback on the International Governance Reports	UEB members	20 December



## **24.155 Health and Safety**

- .1 UEB RECEIVED and NOTED the paper (UEB/24/182).
- .2 At its last meeting, Council expressed the opinion that it was not assured that the University had appropriate plans in place to close any gaps in health and safety compliance.
- .3 It was REPORTED that the Health and Safety Programme had implemented a new mechanism to ensure that Faculties and Professional Service Departments had formal arrangements in place for managing their health and safety risk profile.
- .4 In addition to allowing each accountable individual (Faculty Pro-ViceChancellors and Professional Service Directors) to fulfil their obligations, the new process would enable the Health and Safety Team to monitor the effective implementation of the programme and to provide assurance reporting (metrics) to UEB and Council to demonstrate that the associated risks were being effectively managed, improved or escalated where required.
- .5 A presentation was delivered which highlighted:
  - .1 The health and safety management approach
  - .2 The risk management system
  - .3 Risk management action plan
  - .4 The monitoring audit approach. Monitoring was required in order to provide assurance of compliance, but it would take some parts of the University time to adjust to the new approach.
- .6 It was suggested that six monthly dashboard reporting to Council would support the health and safety team to deliver progress at a quicker pace.
- .7 UEB was reminded that there had been work to implement a new health and safety system but the need to heavily customise the system due to the breadth of the activities undertaken at the University, had led to the system not being suitable.
- .8 It was suggested that a better structure for health and safety resource might support more effective delivery. This might be something considered as part of Future Nottingham.
- .9 The Director of Estates and Facilities provided an overview of health and safety within Estates which focussed on three areas: building and estate safety, making sure that people work safely, and making sure that contractors work safely. An action plan had been developed through the risk management system.
- .10 The Director of Governance and Assurance summarised the message to be shared with Council:
  - .1 There had been significant progress in the last 18 months.
  - .2 As audit and monitoring continued to be rolled out, it was likely that more issues would be identified.
  - .3 A risk-based approach would continue to be taken and where a high risk was identified, the activity would cease until mitigated.
  - .4 The opportunity to review the organisation of health and safety would be provided by Future Nottingham.
  - .5 The University was legally compliant, but there was scope for further improvement and for making compliance and reporting easier.
  - .6 A health and safety system would be introduced in due course.



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#### **24.156 Any Other Business**

- .1 It was confirmed that there was budget allocation for a University contribution to departmental staff Christmas events, but rather as had been the practice for a number of years, it was for budget holders to determine whether it would be appropriate use of individual budgets to fund such a contribution.
- .2 Papers on the Internal Audit Annual Opinion and an Audit Report on International Student Recruitment would be deferred until the next meeting.