



## University Executive Board

### Minutes of the meeting of 5 January 2021

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**Attending** Professor Shearer West (Vice-Chancellor), Professor John Atherton (FPVC Medicine and Health Sciences), Professor Dame Jessica Corner (PVC RKE), Dr Paul Greatrix (Registrar), Professor Jeremy Gregory (FPVC Arts), David Hill (CDO), Jaspal Kaur (Director of Human Resources), Professor Sam Kingman (FPVC Engineering), Professor Todd Landman (FVPC Social Sciences), Professor Andrew Long (DVC), Professor Nick Miles (Provost UNNC), Professor Robert Mokaya (PVC GE), Margaret Monckton (CFO), Professor Kevin Shakesheff (FPVC Science), Professor Sarah Sharples (PVC EDI), Sarah Speight (PVC ESE)

**Attending** Rowena Hall (Secretary), Jason Carter (Director of Governance and Assurance) for minute 21.03, Tim Watkinson (Director of Communications and Advocacy) for minute 21.03. Professor Duncan Angwin (Dean of Nottingham University Business School) for minute 21.5, Professor Simon Langley-Evans for minute 21.6, Dr Karen Braithwaite (Head of Operations) for minute 21.6, Dr Mohamed Elmaghrbi for minute 21.7, Dr Stacy Johnson for minute 21.7, Anne Partington (Head of Strategic Support) for minute 21.7, Dr Lisa Carroll (Commercial Director) for minute 21.8, Professor Zoe Trodd (Professor of American Literature) for minute 21.8, Jenny Vempati (Director of Internal Audit, Internal Audit Service) for minute 21.10

**Apologies** Professor Graham Kendall (Provost UNM)

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#### **21.01 Welcome, Apologies, Quoracy and Declarations of Interest**

- .1 The Chair welcomed Dr Peter Kirwan, Associate Professor in Early Modern Drama, School of English and Michelle Stirk, Assistant Professor in Accounting, Nottingham University Business School, to the meeting as observers.
- .2 The Secretary confirmed that the meeting was quorate.
- .3 There were no declarations of interest.

#### **21.02 Minutes of the December 2020 Meeting and Action Log**

- .1 The minutes of the meeting held on 1 December 2020 were confirmed as a true record.
- .2 The Action Tracker was NOTED.

#### **21.03 Chair's Business**

- .1 The Vice-Chancellor had circulated an update to UEB on prior to the meeting. The Director of Governance and Assurance, the Chair of the Silver Response Group and the Director of Communications and Advocacy, a member of the Gold Response Group, joined the meeting to provide updates on developments since the announcement of a national lockdown the previous evening.
- .2 The Director of Governance and Assurance reported that:



- .1 Work was underway to ensure that students returning to campus in January would be appropriately supported. This included testing and isolation regimes.
  - .2 It was not intended to close any buildings completely. The Director of Estates and Facilities would oversee the management of buildings ensuring that the appropriate health and safety actions were undertaken to maintain the buildings ready for reoccupation in due course.
  - .3 Regular review of health and safety policies would continue, to ensure their alignment with any changes to government guidance.
  - .4 The Office for Students had issued a reporting requirement in connection with testing and the number of student returners to campus. It was considered that the requirement was excessive, particularly given the statutory requirement to report testing data elsewhere such as Public Health England, but would be complied with as far as was practicable.
- .3 The PVC for Education and Student Experience reported that:
- .1 The provisions in place for the first tranche of the January student returners would not need to change as a result of the lockdown announcement. Plans for the remaining students on non-exempt courses would need to be reviewed as their return to campus was likely to be delayed until at least mid-February. General principles for the management of their return and the completion of their education for the academic year were under development.
  - .2 Consideration was being given to whether the timing of assessments could be pushed back, including the considerable implications of such a decision.
  - .3 Once approaches had been developed, they would be shared with the Gold and Silver Response Groups to ensure the coordination of required logistics, following which Schools would be briefed.
  - .4 The options around safety nets and grace periods were being considered, but it was thought that the efficient exercise of the Extenuating Circumstances policy was preferable. Understanding of the current processing time for extenuating circumstances applications was being sought. UEB NOTED that there was flexibility in the marking time frame if necessary, provided staff informed students.
  - .5 The 20/21 academic year had been planned with scope to support further disruption. An example was the online provision of assessments in January (with the exception of some in-person examinations required by professional, statutory and regulatory bodies).
- .4 The Director of Communications and Advocacy confirmed that the first set of communications for students and staff were being finalised. There would be additional communications when more details were available from the Department for Education. Communications would also follow on specific issues such as accommodation and assessment safety nets.
- .5 The Deputy Vice-Chancellor reflected on the different position presented by the latest national lockdown as compared to the first lockdown in March 2020. Buildings were now COVID-secure and so research could continue where it was not able to be carried on at home. A tranche of student programmes attracted an exemption which enable them to continue with students on campus. Those students and others who had already returned to campus would need to be supported. Libraries and study spaces were permitted to remain open, although opening hours would be reviewed to ensure that they best met with demand.
- .6 It had been confirmed by UCEA that all staff working in higher education now fell within the definition of critical worker and could access school provision during the lockdown. An approach to communication with staff would need to be developed to ensure that only staff



whose work necessitated access to school provisions were encouraged to access it. A refreshed approach to furloughing staff where necessary would also be required. It was NOTED that PGR students were considered to be researchers. They should work from home where possible, but were able to access facilities if required. Whether they were within the critical worker definition was unclear, and the Vice-Chancellor would try to seek clarity on the point.

- .7 Schools in some local authority areas were operating at capacity, so it would be important for the University to give guidance to staff about which staff it considered might be critical staff for the purposes of access to school provision. There were a lot of perspectives to consider as part of the decision, so it was AGREED that the matter should be considered further by the Gold and Silver Response groups outside the meeting.
- .8 UEB was of the view that an early decision around accommodation charges was vital as it would be high on the list of student concerns.
- .9 The Registrar requested that the Silver Response Group considered a mechanism to capture the number of students that had returned to the City as it would inform the University's approach in many areas.
- .10 The ability to compel students to participate in testing regimes was raised, and the Director of Governance and Assurance confirmed that there were legal challenges associated with making testing compulsory and incentives were considered the preferable route. The FPVC MHS confirmed that there was concern about allowing medical and nursing students into clinical settings without assurance of their negative COVID status.

#### **21.04 NUBS Recovery and Growth Strategy**

- .1 UEB RECEIVED the paper (UEB/21/3) which set out a draft high level integrated strategy across multiple dimensions for the reset, recovery and rebalance of Nottingham University Business School. It was presented by the FPVC Social Sciences and, where IT issues permitted, the Dean of Nottingham University Business School (NUBS).
- .2 It was suggested that any further iterations of the paper or future business case should consider on a wider more strategic level what differentiates NUBS from other business schools and focus on how its unique aspects can be best employed for maximum benefit. The asset of international campuses was one element raised in discussion. It should be made clearer how NUBS planned to engage and align its strategy with University strategic initiatives. UEB considered that NUBS had the potential to be at the heart of Digital Nottingham and Nottingham Online.
- .3 Consideration should be given to approaches employed in the past that had not been as successful as had been hoped with a view to understanding the reasons. A detailed strength and weaknesses assessment within the business case might help focus attention.
- .4 UEB was of the opinion that NUBS should be an integral part of the University and should not seek to become too distinct and separate from the University, which could often be the case for business schools. It must work in partnership across the University to develop and innovate its curriculum.
- .5 It was not clear how engaged NUBS staff had been in the development of the paper. A real cultural shift in the school was required so full engagement by staff in the development of the business case was necessary. The FVPC confirmed that there was clearly an opportunity to look at the division of labour within the School and to prepare a teaching excellence plan.
- .6 The PVC RKE NOTED the performance of the School in REF also suggested that there were significant challenges for the School.
- .7 The Dean of NUBS thanked UEB for their feedback provided, but stressed the School's ability to engage and deliver a plan in line with the suggestions was limited due to restrictions on



resourcing. The Vice-Chancellor directed the Dean to discuss resourcing issues and requirements with the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Chief Financial Officer.

- .8 The huge potential for success within NUBS was NOTED by UEB. Following a full discussion of the content of the paper, UEB confirmed support for its direction of travel and looked forward to the development of a full business case over the coming months.

#### **21.05 Sutton Bonington Campus and Recommendations for Future Management Structure**

- .1 UEB RECEIVED the paper (UEB/21/2) from the FPVC Science which set out some of the challenges faced by the Sutton Bonington Campus, in particular during 2020. The presentation of the paper was also supported by The Head of the School of Biosciences, Professor Langley-Evans, and the Head of Operations of the School of Veterinary Medicine and Science, Karen Braithwaite.
- .2 Whilst the paper contained a number of recommendations, UEB was only being requested to approve the first, which proposed the establishment of a Sutton Bonington Strategy and Management Board. The Board would own an action plan to progress strategy for the issues raised in the paper. The membership of the Board would include individuals from across the University—not just those based at Sutton Bonington.
- .3 Professor Langley-Evans highlighted that the most significant issue was ensuring equality of experience for the students based at Sutton Bonington. There had been a disparity for a number of years which had been brought into sharp focus by the pandemic.
- .4 It was suggested by the PVC EDI and People that an EDI lead based at Sutton Bonington should be engaged with in the activity of the Board.
- .4 UEB AGREED the establishment of the Sutton Bonington Strategy and Management Board as a mechanism for engaging more effectively on the issues relevant to Sutton Bonington.

#### **21.06 Race Equality Charter Mark: Bronze Submission**

- .1 UEB RECEIVED the paper (UEB/21/1) from the PVC EDI and People which included the University's draft bronze submission for the Race Equality Charter Mark. Dr Stacy Johnson, Dr Mohamed Elmaghrbi and the Head of Strategic Support attended the meeting in support of the paper.
- .2 The Vice-Chancellor clarified that UEB would not make any decision about the additional funding requirements referenced in the paper. These would need to be discussed with the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Chief Financial Officer in the first instance.
- .3 UEB NOTED that the draft submission was supported by an action plan. The team were congratulated on the development of such comprehensive and persuasive documentation.
- .4 Since the circulation of the paper, the draft submission had been reviewed externally by a reviewer from Advance HE and by Imperial College under a reciprocal agreement. Suggestions had been made to strengthen the submission and had now been included.
- .5 The challenges of being able to provide live data and there being support for the analysis of that data were discussed. It was acknowledged that those challenges were the biggest risk to the success of reducing the attainment gap and the delivery of the targets under the Access and Participation Plan.



- .6 There had been engagement across the University as development of the submission progressed, but it was acknowledged that there was always scope for further engagement. It was intended that the action plan would be shared with both Council and Senate.
- .7 UEB APPROVED the action plan for inclusion as part of the bronze submission.

	<b>ACTION</b>	<b>OWNER</b>	<b>DUE</b>
.8	The CDO would review the data related actions included in the action plan and propose additional wording.	Chief Digital Officer	8 January

**21.07 Slavery Free Campus and Blueprint**

- .1 UEB RECEIVED the paper (UEB/21/4) from the Commercial Director and the Director of the Rights Lab. The paper asked UEB to endorse the vision for UNUK to become a slavery-free campus within a five year timeframe and confirmed the proposed the publication of a Blueprint to structure its pathway to this was the right approach.
- .2 There were a number of stated ambitions which were set out across the five year time frame, culminating in the University securing the leading/standard setting position across all sectors consistent with the reputation and performance of the Rights Lab.
- .3 The PVC Education and Student Experience highlighted the challenges of ensuring that the subject matter was embedded into the curriculum rather than being incorporated in a bolt-on module. The PVC EDI and People was keen to ensure that EDI issues were managed in the same way.
- .4 The challenges of adopting a more general approach across all three campuses were discussed.
- .5 UEB ENDORSED the stated ambition to become a slavery-free campus, subject to an amendment to the wording of option 5, to state that the University would align itself with the leading/standard setting position. UEB further ENDORSED the associated Blueprint and communications/publication plan.

**21.08 Office for Students - Consultation on Quality and Standards**

- .1 UEB RECEIVED the paper (UEB/21/6) from the Registrar which set out a draft response to the first phase of an Office for Students’ consultation on Quality and Standards.
- .2 Concern was expressed that the proposed interventions by the OfS would not help assure quality and standards, but would instead curtail the University’s ability and freedom to manage those areas itself. There was consternation that such proposals were being suggested by the OfS when it had already designated a body to oversee quality and standards.
- .3 The PVC EDI and People requested that the coversheet to the paper be amended to indicate there were potential EDI implications, particularly where there was overlap with APP plans and targets.
- .4 UEB NOTED that other HEIs, UUK and the Russell Group were likely to provide robust responses to the consultation. UEB APPROVED the draft response for submission to the OfS.

**21.09 Learnings from Recent Fraud Investigations**



- .1 UEB RECEIVED and NOTED the paper (UEB/21/5). The Director of Internal Audit provided an overview of the most recent investigations into suspected fraud and financial irregularities.
- .2 Types of fraud more commonly experienced at the University included conflicts of interest or false reporting, but might also include external fraud or abuse of time and resources. The Director provided guidance on a number of activities and approaches which could be adopted by UEB members to help reduce the opportunities for fraudulent activity and explained the red flags that might indicate activity of concern. In particular, UEB members were asked to ensure that backdated letters were not signed by them or on their behalf.
- .3 UEB members were asked to speak to the Director or the Registrar if they received any reports of potentially fraudulent activity.

	<b>ACTION</b>	<b>OWNER</b>	<b>DUE</b>
.4	To include some 'near miss' examples in future annual fraud reports.	Director of Internal Audit	

**21.10 Roundtable Discussion**

- .1 UEB received an update on hospital capacity and staffing concerns. Clinical academics were once again starting to move across to full NHS responsibilities.
- .2 Monitoring of IT systems would be stepped up to ensure systems were running smoothly during the lockdown period.
- .3 UEB discussed the replacement of the Erasmus+ scheme with the Turing Scheme and the limited available details on the new scheme. .
- .4 Details of LF1 would be presented at the next Senior Leaders' meeting. There would a number USS workshops delivered to staff across the University by the Chief Financial Officer and an external pensions advisor. UEB members were asked to attend the session most relevant to their specialism.