

MINUTES

STRATEGY AND PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE, SP-22

Date: Wednesday 6 November 2024 Time: 1500

Location: CA 306 Catalyst Third Floor

Members						
Precious Ogbein	Student Governor (President, Students' Union)	Р				
Professor Chris Headleand	Staff Governor (Academic staff)	Α				
Colin Hughes	External Member	Р				
Professor Martin Jones	Vice Chancellor	Р				
Juliet Oosthuysen (Chair)	External Member	Р				
Martin Pugh (Deputy Chair)	External Member	P				
Josie Morris	External Member					
In attendance	-					
lan Blachford	n Blachford Chief Operating Officer and Clerk to the Board of Governors					
Annabel Kiernan	Pro Vice Chancellor – Education					
Sally McGill	Chief Financial Officer					
Raheel Nawaz	Pro Vice Chancellor – Digital Transformation	Р				

P = Present; A = Apologies; Ab = Absent; L = Late; IA = In Attendance

1 MEETING MANAGEMENT						
432	Apologies for absence were received from Chris Headleand.					
433	There were no new declarations of interest					
434	Membership of the Committee for 2024/25:					
	Constitution External Members	MEMBERSHIP Colin Hughes Josie Morris Juliet Oosthuysen (Chair) Martin Pugh (Deputy Chair)				
	Student Governor	Precious Ogbein (President, Students' Union)				
	Staff Governor	Professor Chris Headleand (Academic Staff Governor)				
	Vice Chancellor	Professor Martin Jones				
	In attendance	Ian Blachford, Chief Operating Officer & Clerk to the Board Sally McGill, Chief Financial Officer Professor Annabel Kiernan, Pro Vice Chancellor – Academic Professor Raheel Nawaz, Pro Vice Chancellor – Digital Transformation				
435	Minutes of the last meeting of the Committee, 17 May 2023 SP/22/01					
436	Matters arising:					

- Minute 419 Student Recruitment the latest student recruitment figures were provided at the Board of Governors
 meeting on 2nd October 2024. The student recruitment performance in covered as separate agenda item.
- Minute 427 The Ofs Indicators for Assessing Compliance with B3 Condition of Registration Report the latest information had been released from the Office for Students in July 2024. A separate paper would follow to the next committee meeting.
- Minute 2918 of the Board of Governors to note that the Board had agreed to the proposed composition and membership of the Committee for the 2024-25 academic year.
- 437 The Overview of annual business 2024-2025 SP/22/02 was noted for information.

2 FOR DISCUSSION AND/OR APPROVAL (marked below accordingly)

- The Terms of Reference for the Committee 2024-2025 SP/22/03 were presented to the Committee for annual approval. It was noted that there were no amendments to the terms of reference however the risk appetites will be updated following approval at the Board of Governors on Tuesday 26 November. The Committee approved the Terms of Reference for the Committee.
- 439 The Strategic context for HE landscape: Labour 100 Days In Government HE Policy Direction Update SP/22/04 was introduced for discussion by Professor Martin Jones, Vice Chancellor who highlighted the following main points:
 - A Skills England Bill per se does not exist; a Bill is in the Westminster system to transfer the functions from the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE) to the Department for Education (DfE), and then Skills England in turn. Under the Labour Government, the DfE also has the functions of the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) and combining these with IfATE in Skills England as an executive agency 'arms-length body', allows government to streamline the governance of skills to address complexity and also simplify and devolve adult education budgets to mayoral combined authorities to ensure that they can address the skills needs and fuel the growth agenda. Last, Skills England is also expected to provide strategic oversight of the post-16 skills system aligned to Labour's new Industrial Strategy—launched in October as a Green Paper consultation document.
 - The paper also summarises the policy note from the MillionPlus mission group, which University of Staffordshire is a member of, provides a high-level summary of the Skills England policy agenda including:
 - Skills England will shape the government's response to skills needs by identifying key priority areas: They
 will work closely with the Industrial Strategy Council, Migration Advisory Committee and across Government
 to support the join up of national and regional systems.
 - Working with further and higher education to clarify and strengthen the qualifications landscape is one of the key priorities outlined by Skills England: Among their other priorities are understanding employers' skills requirements and focusing hard on successful outcomes for students.
 - We can expect a strong regional focus from Skills England: Their report stresses strong variations in the skills needs across different regions and highlights that skills are nurtured locally for local employers. They have also committed to collaborating intensively with teams in the regions and across government.
 - Skills England identify a strong link between productivity and skills: Their report notes that around one third
 of average annual UK productivity growth is attributable to an expansion of skills available in the workforce
 between 2001 and 2019.
 - A new growth and skills levy announced: This new levy will see some level 7 apprenticeships moved outside the scope of levy funding, with the qualifications retaining funding to be determined by Skills England.
 - Skills England engagement: Skills England will take forward a series of roundtables and webinars in the
 autumn to further test and refine the initial assessment of skills needs. They will also be consulting with
 employers and other organisations to provide initial views on what high-value training should be accessible
 through the Growth and Skills Levy.

Members and attendees commented as follows:

- Colin Hughes highlighted that the Skills England Bill would present both opportunities and risks, which would need to be monitored, particularly the risk that the degree model of higher education would be challenged on a future fit. It was a concern if the rhetoric of FE delivering HE as a cheaper provider progressed.
- Josie Morris asked if there were currently institutions that delivered both FE and HE as their business model. It was
 confirmed that this was the case, and that a dilution of this model was also in existence of FE colleges working in
 partnership to deliver the HE provision, although not having degree awarding powers. The risk was FE being
 provided degree awarding powers in its own right, on the belief of a being a cheaper provider.
- It was noted that the Vice Chancellor had applied for a position on the Skills England Board.

The paper was noted.

The Undergraduate & Postgraduate Student Recruitment Performance update SP/22/05 was introduced for discussion by Professor Annabel Kiernan, Pro Vice Chancellor Academic who outlined the undergraduate and postgraduate recruitment performance for home and international students as of October 2024.

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Members and attendees commented as follows:

- Martin Jones commented that it was undeniable that the student recruitment level of competition has increased as a
 consequence of the position of international numbers reducing and it was undeniable that higher tariff universities
 are now more predatory in our part of the market. However, what this report showed is that we need to improve our
 position and performance as we cannot continue on this trajectory. This would be a significant focus of the
 forthcoming strategic event about how we break this cycle.
- Juliet Oosthuysen asked about the strategy for the development of a route out of this position. Annabel Kiernan
 explained that this would be discussed at the strategic event, reflecting upon the challenges that were impacting
 upon the university's performance.
- Juliet Oosthuysen asked about how data would be used to inform decisions. Annabel Kiernan explained that the
 Data and Business Intelligence team were supporting the plans that were being developed regarding the academic
 portfolio and its performance.
- Martin Pugh asked how these revised numbers would influence the income for the year. Sally McGill explained that
 this would be presented to Sustainability and Resources Committee and onward to the Board of Governors meeting
 in November. A rough order of magnitude was that we were £1.4m adrift on income, including the apprenticeship
 numbers. The strategic financial plan was also coming back to the November Board of Governors meeting.

The paper was noted.

- The KPI Scorecard SP/22/06 was introduced by Chief Operating Officer Ian Blachford as a guide for governors and a summary of subsequent papers.
 - Martin Pugh asked about the student demographic data and the continued development of the reporting of this so
 that we could determine where we are against targets. Ian Blachford explained the current situation and it was
 agreed at the next meeting the student demographic report would be undertaken from the end of cycle report. The in
 year reporting needed to be addressed in cycle. This was also agreed.

There were no comments and the KPI Scorecard was noted.

- The **Student Employability Report** SP/22/07 was introduced for discussion by Pro Vice Chancellor Annabel Kiernan who highlighted the key impact-driven employability initiatives carried out during the 2023-24 academic year, their positive effects on the student experience, and their contribution to KPIs. It also outlines priorities for 2024-25 and estimates graduate outcomes and graduate retention rates for the Class of 2023, based on activities delivered during the 2024 academic year.
 - Graduate Outcomes scores in the main League Tables have significantly increased, exceeding interim targets and bringing us closer to achieving the 2027 KPIs: 75% of graduates in graduate level roles, in accordance with the Graduate Outcomes Survey. We currently stand at 74% in the Times (+1%) and exceed the target with 78% in the Guardian (+3%). 20% graduate retention in graduate roles in Staffordshire as a proportion of all graduates. We currently exceed the target at 22% (+2%).

- We have given ourselves these interim targets for 2025: 78% of graduates in graduate level roles, in accordance with the Graduate Outcomes Survey and 24% graduate retention in graduate roles in Staffordshire as a proportion of all graduates.
- Engagement in employability initiatives from students, graduates, and employers has grown for the third consecutive year. Data shows a 26% rise in one-on-one appointments (5,342), a 15% increase in placement activity (2,707), and a 43% increase in employer engagement (473). The Careers platform recorded 31,450 activities completed by 7,029 registered users, including EDGE. However, career sessions decreased by 40% last year due to significant staff loss. Career engagement remains crucial for improving students' career planning, confidence, and outcomes.
- We secured £97,000 in innovation funding for the Graduate Accelerator internships project, delivering an additional 30 internships to underemployed and unemployed Class of 2023 graduates with local employers. These opportunities enhanced graduates' experience, social capital, and competitiveness in the labour market, positively influencing outcomes in Stoke and London. We plan to replicate this model in collaboration with Unitemps.
- Prospective students from feeder schools and colleges participated in new career events delivered in collaboration
 with Recruitment teams. These included UCAS application preparation, CV workshops, and mock interview sessions.
 Over 150 prospective students engaged in activities such as employer business challenges and due to this success
 an ongoing events programme is planned for 2024-25.
- We launched three new initiatives: 1) the Be-Inspired startups programme, 2) a 20-credit Employability Module with an integrated micro-placement, and 3) a Volunteering Programme in collaboration with the Student Union and VAST (Volunteering Action SoT). These programmes provide students with valuable work experience, enhancing their confidence and competitiveness in the graduate labour market.
- A new EDGE Skills Award, endorsed by employers and featuring digital badges, is also in development. With a
 refreshed design, expanded skill offerings, and local employer support, the updated EDGE will launch through the
 Careers portal in January 2025.
- These institutional initiatives are designed to enhance our KPIs and improve the student experience. They support the
 university's continued success and ambition to return to a top 50 position in league tables. We are also accelerating
 the integration of employability and work experience across the student journey and curriculum, reaching prospective
 students early to boost their career confidence, social capital, and work readiness.

Members and attendees commented as follows:

- Martin Pugh asked about the careers team and TOM. Annabel Kiernan explained that the team would be moving directorate as part of the TOM implementation.
- Josie Morris explained that she has had varying experience of dealing with the university as an employer and how
 widely known the employability agenda was, and how this could be broadened and deepened. These comments
 would be passed to the employability team to consider further, and the new Executive Director of Business to
 Markets once in post.
- Juliet Oosthuysen asked about how these key messages would be promoted as part of the brand repositioning work, as these were strong messages that could influence applicant decision making. Annabel Kiernan agreed with this and explained that it was used, but this needs to be further developed.

The report was noted.

- The **In-Year Student Retention Report** SP/22/08 was introduced for discussion by Professor Annabel Kiernan, Pro Vice Chancellor Academic who summarised the following:
 - Retention remains a strategic priority, particularly in light of the OfS's ongoing B3 condition of registration. The B3
 condition focuses on the student outcomes of continuation, completion, and progression (into graduate careers).
 - New entrant withdrawals are a leading indicator to the continuation measured used in B3 and is now a key metric reviewed as part of Course Monitoring.
 - End of vear withdrawal rates:
 - o Full Time Undergraduate in 2023/24 were 10.0% (850/8465) compared with 12.1% (1071/8874) last year.
 - Full time postgraduate (inc. PGCE) in 2023/24 were 8.7% (201/2318) compared with 9.1% (225/2478) last vear.
 - Part time Undergraduate in 2023/24 were 7% (413/5922) compared with 6.8% (451/6636) last year.
 - Part time postgraduate (inc. PGCE) in 2023/24 were 11.4% (174/1528) compared with 13% (213/1641) last year.
 - Departments with withdrawal rates worse than last year or had rates over 2 percentage points above the University average withdrawal rate of 10%: DTIB-IBI 14.3% (42/293), DTIB- SUL 13.2% (54/410) and HEPS - SLC 13.4% (89/665).
 - Full time new entrant withdrawal rate were 12.6% (339/2695) compared with 15% (458/3046) in 2022/23, this is a drop of 2.4pp with DTIB seeing a 3.1pp drop to 13% and HEPS seeing a 1.8pp to 12.1%.
 - Full Time undergraduate withdrawals have reduced at all levels of study notable at level 3 and 4 which fell by 2.7pp and 3pp respectively.

Members and attendees commented as follows:

Annabel Kiernan explained about the digital nudges through beacon, and how these were trying to support continued
engagement and re-engagement where this was faltering. Often this was driven by mental health and wellbeing and
financial challenges. These nudges therefore would help direct students into accessing support services.

The report was noted.

- The **Energy Consumption Performance Report** SP/22/09 was introduced for discussion by Chief Financial Officer Sally McGill who outlined the following main points:
 - In 2023/24, scope 1 and 2 carbon emissions totalled 4,185 tC02e (compared to 4,040 tC02e in 2022/23) against a strategic KPI target of 3,623 tC02e. This increase in emissions year on year resulted from higher gas consumption in 2023/24. This was partly attributable to the decision to re-activate the Combined Heat and Power (CHP) unit in the Science Centre which burns gas but is also the back-up power supply for scientific equipment within the building. The University therefore missed its target by 562 tC02e or 16%.
 - Of those scope 1 and 2 emissions, 3,685 tC02e came from externally purchased energy (electricity and gas). The rest of the emissions came from fleet emissions (Estates vehicles) and refrigerant (F-Gas/ Air con units) emissions.
 - For 2024/25, the forecast scope 1 and 2 emissions are 3,961 tC02e, of which 3,461 tC02e relate to gas and electricity. The University KPI target for 2024/25 is 3,559 tC02e. This forecast means missing the target by 11%.
 - Carbon reduction The University continues to focus on reducing energy consumption through managing energy consumption in individual buildings and is working on improving its Building Management System (BMS) in order to achieve this. The 2023/24 performance is disappointing and bigger steps are clearly needed in order to achieve the milestone targets to 2030.
 - A full refresh of the Carbon reduction scopes 1 and 2 plan to 2030, including new measures to reduce carbon
 emissions, will be presented to Sustainability and Resources Committee in March 2025, alongside the plan for campus
 improvements arising from the Estates Condition Survey of existing buildings.

Members and attendees commented as follows:

Juliet Oosthuysen asked why the Combined Heat and Power Unit had been turned back on, impacting performance.
 Sally McGill explained that this decision had been implemented because there was a risk to the activities of the science centre, by not having a contingency power supply. Alternatives for this back up were now to be explored.

The report was noted.

- The **Staffing Demographic Profile Report** SP/22/10 was introduced for discussion by Chief Operating Officer Ian Blachford who highlighted the following main points:
 - University of Staffordshire staff employed 1,329 staff (excluding part-time lecturers) in September 24 and 85% declared they were from a White background while 12.3% declared they were from an ethnic minority background. Our current target is to ensure 17% of staff employed across the organisation are from an ethnic minority background.
 - In terms of direction of travel, in January 2022 (the commencement in role of the current Vice Chancellor and the development of the overall KPI), 8.2% of our staff were from an ethnic minority background. Since that time, we have seen a positive increase of 4.1% more ethnic minority staff employed in the period, bringing us to our current position of 12.3%.
 - Modelling our current recruitment, selection, and staff turnover rates, we are likely to reach our internal target of 17% ethnic minority staff by 2026-2027. This is further underpinned by our job applications which shows that 61.49% of applications between the 1st April 2024 and the 1st October 2024 were from ethnic minority backgrounds, higher than the UK national average population at 18% of ethnic minorities. There has been a 18.4% increase when compared to 43.08% of ethnic minority applicants from the 1st April 2023 to the 1st October 2023. This evidences that are recruitment market strategy, especially with us working with the Shelton Community Partnership in promoting our job roles within the local community is delivering positive results.
 - In closer examination of our ethnicity profile, it is important to understand whether we are employing more people from ethnic minority backgrounds who live within the region, or employing more people from outside the UK, who would require visas. From January 2022 to September 2024, a further 46 people were employed from a minority ethnic background, making the total of 163 (12.3%). The data illustrates 53% ethnic minority employees are from the UK/Ireland and 3% are from the EU/EEA (European Union/European Economic Area) and 44% are from other countries.
 - The overall ethnic minority figures are pleasing; however, we are aware these mask issues of under representation on a school and service basis. To address this, along with the impact the Target Operating Model may have on the ethnic minority profile per school and service area (positive, neutral or negative), we are proactively monitoring the staff ethnic data as a part of our equality commitments at the University of Staffordshire Inclusion Group meetings and with the Deans and Directors at their Senior Leadership Team meetings to address any disparities identified.

Members and attendees commented as follows:

- Juliet Oosthuysen asked about the use of Stonewall. IB explained that the university were aware of the reputational
 aspects of the organisation, and this was considered both in terms of contracting with them and with who they
 interacted. More broadly, the point was agreed with.
- It was noted the developments in the data collection including sex and gender was pleasing, but noting that these
 categories were separate and the roll out needed to be handled carefully. This was agreed.
- Josie Morris highglighted that the Honorary Doctorate selection had yielded a conversation regarding the diversity of those being put forward, and the numbers of individuals who had been put forward, and the number of individuals who had nominated these people. It had been discussed that it would be helpful for the Board to also consider individuals who would be worthy of an honorary doctorate, together with a broader ask from the university.
- Ian Blachford explained that the staffing profile of ethnic minorities would be redistributed as part of the TOM
 programme of work, which would form larger teams, and may provide a further inroad to the variability of the ethnic
 profile across departments.

The report was noted.

The League Table Performance Report SP/22/11 was introduced for discussion by Vice Chancellor Professor Martin Jones. This report provides a summary of the University's performance in the three major UK league tables this summer and our performance in the latest league table, the Daily Mail as well as an update on our performance in the three key international rankings as well as an update on the League Tables Improvement Action Plan.

The University has set a KPI of achieving top 50% in the three major UK league tables. In 2024 the University has risen in two of the three established UK league tables and dropped in one. The University currently sits:

- 97th out of 130 institutions in the Complete University Guide, up 11 places from 108th (released May 2024).
- 58th out of 122 institutions in the Guardian University Guide, a rise of 5 places from 63rd (released Sept 2024) meaning we have now entered the top 50% of rankings in The Guardian University Guide.
- 101st out of 132 institutions in the Times/Sunday Times Good University Guide, down 8 places from 93rd (released Sept 2024).
- The University was placed 66th out of 129 institutions in the second Daily Mail University guide, up from 71st in 2023
 and for the 2nd year running is placed 5th in the first-generation student metric rank. For the first time, the Daily Mail
 have released subject rankings.
- The Times Higher Education Impact Rankings 2024 were released on the 12th June 2024. This is the fourth year the University has featured in the impact rankings. The University is ranked 601-800 out of 1963 institutions, maintaining our ranking position from last year. It should be noted that the number of institutions involved in the impact rankings this year has increased by 23.4% on last year. The University's overall score of 69.1 is an increase on the overall score of 65.6 in 2023. Despite the drop in score in SDG4 Quality Education, from 73.3 to 71.1, the University remains second ranked in the UK for this SDG.
- The University has seen a fall in its overall ranking in the Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2025
 published on the 9th October. We have fallen from rank 1001-1200 last year to rank 1201-1500 this year. Because of
 the timing of the release, a detailed analysis of the University's performance will be provided to the Committee's next
 meeting.

Members and attendees commented as follows:

Discussion ensued regarding the importance of addressing the NSS deficiencies, so that that this impacted upon the
rank order of institutions, which then informed the league table measurement of the relevant component parts. AK
reported that early signs were significant improvement in NSS performance in the previously poorly performing
areas.

The report was noted.

The Apprenticeships Performance Report SP/22/12 was introduced for discussion by Professor Raheel Nawaz who outlined the following main points:

Members and attendees commented as follows:

- Colin Hughes welcomed the report and it was noted that the margins on apprenticeships were narrow. It was noted
 that the competition for the MOD forthcoming contract would be fierce, with the second stage focused heavily on
 costing.
- Martin Pugh asked about the OfS apprenticeship funding. It was noted that we had been successful in wave one but not wave two or wave three.

The report was noted.

- The Research Performance Report SP/22/13 was introduced for discussion by Vice Chancellor Professor Martin Jones who outlined the following main points:
 - £5m income from externally funded research per annum Our 2023/24 financial forecast was £1.8M, at year end we
 have recognised £1.7M which is slightly behind the financial forecast. However, we exceeded our projected KPI target
 of £1.0M.
 - 55% of our outputs will be co-authored internationally This target is measured by analysis of the publications recorded on Scopus¹ (an abstract and citation database of peer-reviewed academic research publications) which are affiliated to Staffordshire University. Outputs on Scopus are recorded by the calendar year of publication rather than academic year. Our in-year data (15th October 2024) shows 51.8% of our academic outputs have involved international collaboration in 2024. Our target for 2023/24 is 52%. This figure is subject to change given the lag on the data, but indicates we are on track for the Strategic Plan target.
 - Secure entry into the QS World University Rankings by 2024-2025 and progress to 'top 1000' We are not currently
 in the QS World University Rankings and have in place a strategy to work towards our future entry. 30% of the ranking
 methodology is reliant on an international reputational survey. We have collated over 1400 academic contacts to
 request consent to participate in the reputational survey for the QS world rankings in advance of our submission on
 29th November 2024.
 - Research has been categorised as Tier 2 in our strategic re-prioritisation and as part of the Target Operating Model (TOM). Whilst we have experienced positive in-year performance, due to the departure of research active staff, there has been a significant change in our research staff base over the last 12 months. Compared to our REF 2021 submission, our research-active academic staff population has decreased by 25%. Whilst research remains important to the institution's brand and strategy, the size and shape of our ambitions need to be refocused to the current academic and professional support staff capacity. We predict a delay of one year in our entry to the QS World University Rankings and proposes a revised income target of £1.5 million research income by 2027.

Members and attendees commented as follows:

• Martin Pugh asked about the broader question on the place of research for the institution, as well as the financial aspects of this and the impact on league tables. Martin Pugh reflected that the university needed to ensure that it did not compromise its position on research. Martin Jones explained that this was not a compromise, but it was one of recalibrating and reshaping what this is for the University. The messaging of this approach needed to be considered so that there are not mixed messages. Martin Jones explained that research was being realigned to the academic portfolio so that there was congruence and that this would then drive curriculum growth. This message had been shared recently with staff through the VC Connects session.

The report was noted.

The Annual Report on Learning & Teaching SP/22/14 was introduced for discussion by Professor Annabel Kiernan, Pro Vice Chancellor Academic who highlighted that during this period of change and challenge for the sector, there has been a refocus of activities to reflect these developments and ensure that work is targeted towards the tier one priority of improving students' experience and outcomes to ensure a clear 'line of sight' between actions and intended impact and enable a focus on 'what works'. This report presents key highlights (rather than a comprehensive overview of all activity) aligned to the tier one priority of student performance.

Members and attendees commented as follows:

Martin Pugh asked when the next TEF would take place. Annabel Kiernan commented that it was planned for 2027.

The report was noted.

3 FOR INFORMATION

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The Vice Chancellor Martin Jones presented the **Update on HE sector consultations** SP/22/15 for information.

- The University responds to a number of higher education consultations during the year. The Committee agreed in 2021
 that it would find it helpful to see a summary of HE sector consultations issued between meetings together with a
 summary of our responses if one has been submitted. This is the tenth of such summaries.
- It should be noted that since September 2020 we have responded to just under a 100 consultations. 19 consultations
 were responded to in the academic year 2023/24. Since the start of the academic year 2024/25 the University has yet
 to respond formally to a consultation.

The report was noted.

4 ADDITIONAL MATTERS 451 Any additional matters 452 Items to be referred to Board of Governors For Approval a) Minute 438 - Terms of Reference for the Committee 2024-2025 SP/22/03 For Information

a) Minute 441 - KPI Scorecard SP/22/06

453 Next meeting: Wednesday 5 March 2024 (CA 306 Catalyst, Leek Rd)