MINUTES

STRATEGY AND PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE, SP-10

Date:	Thurs 22 October 2020	**Time:**	1500
Location:	Boardroom (University House)/Online Microsoft Teams meeting		

Notes:

1. Items marked with an asterisk (starred items) were for information only or regarded as noncontentious. Starred items will not be discussed and will be assumed to have been noted or approved unless a request to unstar a named item is received from a Board member in advance, or at the commencement, of the meeting.

2. Items classified as Confidential, and their subsequent minutes (highlighted here in blue), will be redacted before publication of the agenda and minutes on the University's public website.

Members		
Professor Liz Barnes	Vice Chancellor	P
Connor Bayliss	Student Governor (President, Students' Union)	P
Glenn Earlam (Deputy Chair)	External Member	A
Colin Hughes	External Member	P
Simon Smith	Staff Governor (academic staff)	P
Sara Williams (Chair)	External Member	P
In attendance		
Ian Blachford	Chief Operating Officer and Clerk to the Board of Governors	IA
Andrea Caulfield-Smith	Executive Director of Marketing, Recruitment and Comms *(item 179*	IA
Professor Ieuan Ellis	Pro Vice Chancellor – Place and Engagement	IA
Phil Hawley	Assistant Director of Planning and Business Intelligence *(items 174-178)*	IA
Professor Martin Jones	Deputy Vice Chancellor	IA
Sally McGill	Chief Financial Officer	IA
Andrew Proctor	Pro Vice Chancellor - Digital	IA
Lauren Rooke	Assistant Clerk to the Board of Governors (minutes)	IA

P = Present (via Teams); A = Apologies; IA = In Attendance (via Teams)

1 MEETING MANAGEMENT	
165	**Apologies for absence** were received from Glenn Earlam.
166	There were no new **declarations of Interest**.
167	The **Membership of the Committee for 2020/21** was noted:

Constitution **MEMBERSHIP**
External Members Glenn Earlam (Deputy Chair)
Colin Hughes
Sara Williams (Chair)
[Vacancy]
Student
Governor Connor Bayliss (President, Students' Union)

	Staff Governor Simon Smith (Academic Staff Governor)
	Vice Chancellor Professor Liz Barnes
	In attendance Ian Blachford, Chief Operating Officer & Clerk to the Board Professor Ieuan Ellis, Pro Vice chancellor – Place and Engagement Sally McGill, Chief Financial Officer Professor Martin Jones, Deputy Vice Chancellor Andrew Proctor, Pro Vice Chancellor – Digital [Vacancy] Executive Director of Academic & Strategic Planning
	It was noted that Professor Dame Sue Hill, who had been scheduled to join the Board and this Committee for the 2020-21 academic year, would now be deferring her start date until a more appropriate time. Consequently, discussions were underway regarding the resulting Committee vacancy and an update would be provided as soon as possible.
168	The **Minutes of the last meeting of the Committee**, 09 June 2020 SP/10/01 were confirmed as a true and accurate record.
169	**Matters arising:** • **Minute 2604 (BG-115a) – Assurance around Quality of Learning and Teaching** – it was noted that this area had been identified as part of the Board Effectiveness Review 2020 and would be progressed via this route. • **Minute 130 – Graduate Outcomes** – it was noted that an update on this appeared elsewhere on the agenda. • **Minute 151 – COVID19 and SNC Update** – it was noted that as of 18 August 2020, student number controls had been lifted.
170	The Committee received for information the ***Overview of annual business for the Committee 2020-21*** SR/13/02.
2 FOR DISCUSSION AND/OR APPROVAL (marked below accordingly)	
171	The **Terms of Reference for the Committee 2020-21** SP/10/03 were received for approval. The Terms of Reference for the Committee were approved, subject to an amend to include a specific reference to determining KPIs, and the revised version would progress to Board of Governors for formal approval.
172	The Committee received a paper on the **Institute of Technology – wave two** SP/10/04 from the Deputy Vice Chancellor, as a precursor to a strategic discussion, noting the following main points: • The Government was establishing high-quality institutes of technology (IoTs): collaborations between further education (FE) providers, universities and employers specialising in delivering higher technical education (at Levels 4 and 5) with a focus on STEM. • In April 2019, the Government announced that 12 Wave One IoTs would be set up across the country, backed by £170m of Government investment to fund industry-standard facilities and equipment. • In March 2020 the University submitted an Expression of Interest (EOI) entitled "Staffordshire Digital Futures Institute" under this Wave Two initiative. Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Enterprise Partnership (SSLEP) had confirmed its strong support for the EOI, but would only support one bid for the county and Keele University had also submitted an EOI. Should two Wave Two bids go forward, SSLEP would establish a process to support only one. • The DfE portal went live on 9th October and submission deadline is 14 December. • Funding, for circa £5m to £15m per bid, was available for capital investment (IoT facilities and equipment) where the investment and brand would deliver significantly more learners with higher technical skill to develop better professional competencies and behaviours. • Bids would be assessed against 3 criteria: employer demand for the IoT; employer engagement; and value for money. • IoTs were required to specialise in at least two of the Defined Sector Subject Areas of which at least one must be Information and Communications Technology. • The forecast total number of learners must reach at least 1,500 by Academic Year 5. The majority of provision (i.e. >85% of the forecast total number of learners in Academic Year 5) must be at L4 and above. While DfE anticipates some L6+ provision, the focus (i.e. >65% of the forecast total number of learners in AY5) must be L4/5. • The IoT must cover at least one complete LEP area and must be wholly located in a LEP area not covered by an existing IoT. • An IOT must contain at least two FE providers, one of whom must be a FE Corporation and have an OFSTED rating of at least good; at least one HE Provider with a University title; and three employers. Members and attendees commented as follows: • ██

	• ██ ███ ▌█████████████████████████████
173	The Committee received for discussion a paper on **evaluating delivery of the University's Strategic Plan – innovative and applied learning** SP/10/05, presented by the Deputy Vice Chancellor. The following main points were noted: • The paper evaluated the existing 2019-20 Innovative and Applied Learning KPIs and discussed the direction that learning and teaching would take in the foreseeable future. Assumptions were made concerning: • The forthcoming review of NSS • The likely emphasis upon value for money quotients • The need for wider sector comparison alongside our localised data (albeit proportionate) • The move to more personalised learning and how the University could approach addressing these aspects in future Innovative and Applied Learning KPIs. • Alignment of such KPIs to the Academic Strategy 2030 was viewed as pivotal for our further successful positioning as being thought-leading for applied learning in the sector. • As well as reporting on KPIs aligned to our current Strategic Plan, Strategy and Performance Committee was asked to endorse this approach to our learning-focused KPI alignment. Members and attendees commented as follows: • Liz Barnes gave further context for the report in terms of current KPI achievement across the institution. Liz further noted the government's current position on the National Student Survey (NSS). • Discussion continued around the NSS and its metrics/questions, with Colin Hughes noting his support for the NSS as a performance measurement tool - regardless of the government position, it gave a valued "instant healthcheck" on a particular course. • Members discussed considerations around KPIs and milestones, with Colin Hughes noting his view that overly stretching KPIs were not advisable and underlining his support for accurate dashboards (using a "milestone approach" showing progress along a trajectory rather than binary targets). Simon Smith echoed this, noting that KPIs should be indicators of ambition rather than the end itself. Sara Williams agreed, noting her preference for non-process based KPIs with consistent, clear language. • The new Executive Director of Academic and Strategic Planning would commence in January 2021 and would be asked to consider the KPIs and their presentation in the light of discussions around how these targets should function for both Executive and the Board of Governors, with an update on this to be considered at the February 2021 Committee meeting. It was agreed that the report on **evaluating delivery of the University's Strategic Plan – innovative and applied learning** be referred to the Board of Governors for information.
174	The Committee received for discussion the **KPI report** SP/10/06, presented by the Deputy Vice Chancellor. The following main points were noted: • The report documented current performance in relation to the Key Performance Indicators to be achieved during the lifecycle of the current Strategic Plan, which would end in 2021. • In response to feedback during 2019-20, the format had changed slightly from the June 2020 meeting onwards to focus on the top 5 KPIs: league table performance, TEF and financial sustainability, as well as the more recent additions of timely completion and REF. Members and attendees commented as follows: • Liz Barnes highlighted that the current KPIs around progression and completion were not unreasonable but that the University was still in a position of trying to recover from a culture of retaining students as dormant for as long as needed. New regulations had been implemented but in some cases we were only starting to see results very recently. • Sara Williams noted that it would be helpful to see initiatives and mitigating actions cross-referenced throughout Committee reports, so that governors could see what was changing in a particular area and how improvements were being made. (Martin Jones highlighted that the Annual Quality Standards and Student Success report would come to the November Board of Governors meeting.) It was agreed that the **KPI report** be referred to the Board of Governors for information.
175	The Committee received for discussion the **student progression report (outcomes and attainment)** SP/10/08, presented by the Deputy Vice Chancellor. The following main points were noted:

- Progression across all full-time undergraduate levels (measured through our KPI report) had dropped in 19/20 and remained below the KPIs set.
- The drop in progression at levels 4-5 and 5-6 had been due to a drop in Health and Social Care (HSC) between level 4 and 5, along with a drop in Digital, Technologies and Arts (DTA) (predominantly in the Games subject area) between level 5 and 6.
- There had been improvements in the progression gap for students with protected characteristics at all levels.
- The University continues to achieve its KPI of 70% good degree rate across its portfolio, with every School apart from HSC above the KPI.
- For the fifth consecutive year, the University had seen an increase in good degree rates, with overall rates increasing by nearly 2%. When splitting between full-time and part-time, the rise was due to a ~3.5% rise in full-time good degrees.
- As well as the improvements in the good degree rate, the gap between Schools' performance had closed and there was now a 16% gap between the highest and lowest performing Schools.
- There had been no significant change in the awarding gaps by protected characteristics, where protected students' groups all continued to perform below the University average apart from female students.

Members and attendees commented as follows:

- Connor Bayliss asked whether the drop in enrolments for BAME students was a sector-wide issue, and Phil Hawley noted that the sector data was not yet available. Martin Jones noted that further work was being done internally on this (regardless of sector trends) and was an important aspect of the University's Race Equality Chartermark submission.
- Connor Bayliss asked about the significantly higher good degree rate for BAME students CP&F and Games & Visual Effects, and Phil Hawley highlighted that this illustrated the importance of drilling deeper into data on BAME student progression and outcomes to avoid treating these students as a homogenous group.
- Colin Hughes raised a query about the usability of the dashboards and data at Board level. Discussion ensued around levels and granularity of data and ensuring effective year-on-year comparisons could be made.

It was agreed that the **student progression report (outcomes and attainment)** be referred to the Board of Governors for information.

| 176 | The Committee received for discussion a paper on **graduate outcomes** SP/10/09, presented by the Deputy Vice Chancellor. The following main points were noted: |

- The results from the new Graduate Outcomes (GO) survey had been released in the latter half of 2019/20. This was a new model for the collection of graduate destinations data, replacing the Destination of Leavers in Higher Education (DLHE) survey and the Longitudinal DLHE (LDLHE). The key differences between the 2 surveys were:
  - Graduate Outcomes was centrally managed through a HESA-appointed third party, while DLHE had been managed within a Higher Education Institution (HEI).
  - Graduate Outcomes was completed 15 months after graduation, compared to DLHE which was 6 months.
  - Graduate Outcomes asked additional questions around graduates' reflections and subjective questions regarding their wellbeing.
- The results showed that:
  - 95.7% of students who graduated in 2017/18 were in either employment or further study (employability), 8.7% above the sector average.
  - 69.6% of full-time undergraduate students were either in graduate-level employment or study (graduate prospects), 8.4% below sector median.
  - Only 47.8% of eligible students completed the survey, down from 77.9% when the survey was completed in-house.
- Whilst our employability metric had remained comparable compared to the previously used DLHE survey, the University had seen a significant downwards shift in graduate prospects.
- Our scores had been significantly impacted due to reduced sample size in high-performing graduate prospect subjects such as Nursing, along with poor results in subjects that either had a large number of students in postgraduate study or subjects where students potentially had more than one job. This issue had been raised across the sector.
- Students with protected characteristics were found to be less likely to be in a graduate role or education – a breakdown of this was given in the report.
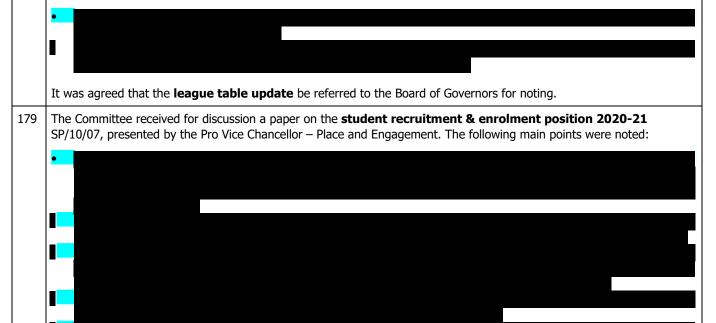
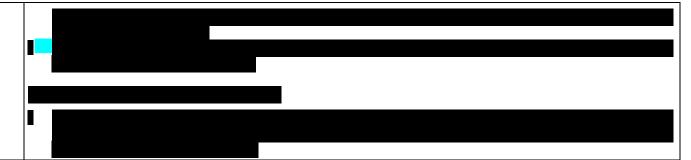Members and attendees commented as follows:

- Liz Barnes noted that one of the reasons the DLHE survey had been more successful was that graduates were much more likely to talk to the University than to a third party (and the University was also more likely to get full answers).
- Ieuan Ellis underlined how important it was to ensure our graduates were well-briefed on how to effectively respond to the survey, particularly to ensure that they provided a true reflection of the graduate-level of their employment when responding to those undertaking the survey.

177	The Committee received for discussion a paper on **course portfolio (quadrant profiles)**, presented by the Deputy Vice Chancellor, who noted the following main points:

• The report provided a visual representation of performance by subject on two types of measure: Quality and Sustainability. The measures were built through a weighted scoring (using the University agreed KPIs) on the below metrics (with the latest data year flagged in brackets). A subject performing below the University KPIs would therefore appear on the lower portion of the chart.
• All measures had been updated to the latest available dataset; the report would continue to be refreshed to ensure completely new entrant figures. When comparing this year with last year, we had seen some subjects become more sustainable, but with a drop in quality. This quality drop was predominantly impacted by the change to measure graduate roles via the graduate outcomes data collection.

Members and attendees commented as follows:

• Connor Bayliss asked about the large jump for Psychology from flagship to unsustainable and Phil Hawley clarified that this was mainly due to NSS results, but also to retention and recruitment issues.
• Ieuan Ellis underlined that the matrix showed the volatility of the metrics and Sally McGill noted that very small changes in performance could lead to seemingly dramatic shifts.
• Discussion continued around the importance of contextualising course movements and using the data as a diagnostic tool to filter out differences between structural challenges and issues that could be more easily resolved. It was underlined that this data was not being used in a binary way in order to make instant judgements around course review, but was one of several factors and elements considered. |
| 178 | The Committee received for discussion a **league table update** SP/10/-, presented by the Deputy Vice Chancellor. The following main points were noted:

• Staffordshire University had dropped in all three major UK university league tables:
  ○ 75th in the Complete University Guide 2021 (CUG), down 17 places from 58th (released June 2020)
  ○ 55th out of 121 institutions in the Guardian University Guide 2021 (Guardian), down 18 places from 37th (released September 2020)
  ○ 76th out of 131 in the Good University Guide 2021 (Times/Sunday Times) down 23 places from 53rd (released September 2020)
• The University was no longer in the top 50% for the Complete University Guide and the Good University Guide (Times/Sunday Times).
• There had been significant drops in the following metrics:
  ○ Career Prospects (following the release of the new Graduate Outcomes survey (GO) which replaced (Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education Survey (DLHE)
  ○ Student Staff Ratio
  ○ Financial Expenditure

Members and attendees commented as follows:

• ██
  ██
  ███

It was agreed that the **league table update** be referred to the Board of Governors for noting. |
| 179 | The Committee received for discussion a paper on the **student recruitment & enrolment position 2020-21** SP/10/07, presented by the Pro Vice Chancellor – Place and Engagement. The following main points were noted:

• ██
  ██
  ███████████████████████████████████████

• ██
• ██
  ██

• ██
  ███

• ██
  ██ |

180	The Committee received for discussion a paper on **apprenticeship performance and monitoring** SP/10/11, presented by the Pro Vice Chancellor – Place and Engagement. The following main points were noted:

- The University submits an annual self-assessment report (SAR) to Ofsted which reflects on apprenticeship performance in the previous academic year. There was no specified format for the report but it was common practice for institutions to follow the style and format of the categories of the Ofsted Education Inspection Framework.
- The draft Annual Self-Assessment being presented in the paper today was focused on our current self-assessment of overall effectiveness and included reference to all other categories. The full SAR report would be a longer document separated into sections with much greater detail supported by data and other evidence for each category. This full self-assessment report would be presented to the 24 November 2020 Board of Governors meeting for approval, ahead of final submission to Ofsted in December 2020.
- The Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) - The grade 3 awarded by Ofsted in May 2019 reflected the judgement that the University's apprenticeship provision required improvement. The monitoring visit conducted in January 2020 reported 'reasonable progress' in all areas inspected but the grade 3 would not be revised until another full inspection took place. Our University had made significant improvements since May 2019 and there was much evidence to support an overall grade 2 at the current time. Current work focused on ensuring greater consistency across our provision with the aim to be an outstanding grade 1 provider as befitted a Gold TEF institution.
- Given the recent announcement that Ofsted would assume inspectorial responsibility for apprenticeship standards at levels 6/7, the draft SAR included our apprenticeships at all levels (4-7). If an inspection visit took place before April 2021, Ofsted would review only provision at levels 4 and 5.
- Subsequent to this paper being finalised and circulated for Strategy and Performance Committee, the University was notified by Ofsted on Monday 19 October that they would be undertaking a two-day monitoring visit on Wednesday 21 and Thursday 22 October, with two HMI inspectors visiting the campus. This visit would not lead to judgements but was designed to understand how the institution had responded and adapted to support apprentices during the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Over the two days of the visit, the two HMIs had met with staff, apprentices, employer representatives and with John Henderson as a governor representative. All meetings apart from those with Ieuan Ellis and Maighread Hegarty had been conducted via Microsoft Teams, emphasising our blended and Covid-safe approach.
- The verbal feedback received from the HMI at the conclusion of the visit at 3pm on 22 October had been extremely positive, highlighting a number of areas of good practice.
- The final written report would be received by the University in the next 10 days for checking factual accuracy, before being published.
- The Pro Vice Chancellor – Place and Engagement conveyed his thanks to Maighread Hegarty (Associate Dean – Apprenticeships) and to all the apprentices, staff, employers and to the Deputy Chair, John Henderson, for engaging at short notice with the Ofsted visit and ensuring such a positive outcome.

Members and attendees commented as follows:

- Members commended the positive outcome of the visit.
- Ieuan Ellis confirmed that the University could still expect a full inspection visit from March 2021 onwards.

181	The Committee received for discussion a paper on **partnerships strategy** SP/10/12, presented by the Pro Vice Chancellor – Place and Engagement. The following main points were noted:

- The paper outlined the planned implementation of the academic partnerships strategy (approved by Academic Board in June 2020) in 2020/21 and made recommendations for the future direction for partnerships.
- From 2017-2020, significant work had been undertaken to refocus the University's collaborative academic partnerships (CAPs) portfolio, to improve quality, reduce reputational risk and improve financial sustainability. This had led to the discontinuation of 50% of all CAPs and a 66% reduction in the number of students studying with partners (18,219 to 6,172). For continuing partners, new contracts had been renegotiated and improved quality approval and performance monitoring processes embedded and during 19/20, four new collaborative academic partnerships were approved.
- The paper highlighted the key priorities, benefits and KPIs of this partnership strategy; explained how the quality and performance of partners were being monitored; provided an overview of how the Covid19 Pandemic had impacted on our partnerships and gave several recommendations on UK / International partners, which the Committee were asked to endorse.

	Members and attendees commented as follows:
	• Ieuan Ellis highlighted the importance of the range of benefits that resulted from partnership agreement such as research opportunities and progression pipeline. • Student Number Controls had highlighted the risks of significant recruitment numbers through UK partners but it was noted that some of our partners were already registered with OfS and could therefore include these students within their own numbers if the need arose. The Committee approved the direction of travel for the Partnerships Strategy.

182	The Committee received for discussion a **research and innovation annual report** SP/10/14, presented by the Deputy Vice Chancellor. The following main points were noted:
	
	• The paper highlighted the major activities and progress in the 2019-20 academic year in relation to the University's research and innovation agenda. These were grouped into four main areas:
	  1. Increasing our research quality: Considerable work had been undertaken to maximise our submission to the Research Excellence Framework (REF) in March 2021. Compared to REF2014, we would submit 109 staff - an increase of approximately 20%. We anticipated that approximately twice as many of our research outputs (e.g. journal articles, publications) would be rated as internationally excellent or world leading (3* or 4*), ca. 70% - a significant improvement.
	  2. Growth in research and innovation income: The value of research and innovation projects awarded during 2019-20 was £4m, an increase of over 140% on the previous year's £1.65m.
	  3. Improving the Post Graduate Research Student Experience: An extremely positive Periodic Review of our postgraduate research provision was undertaken, with commendations in the management of the portfolio, commitment to student success, provision of a comprehensive training programme and ambitions for growth.
	  4. Developing the academic workforce: Structural changes to our workforce had been achieved through the implementation of two different academic pathways: Teaching, Research and Innovation (TRI) and Teaching, Advanced Scholarship and Knowledge Exchange (TASKE) to allow staff to focus on their strengths. Along with the recruitment of senior research leadership through the new Associate Dean for Research and Enterprise Posts, this had allowed for increased focus and energy in our research activity.
	• These areas all contributed to a programme of work to develop our research-innovation-enterprise ecosystem as we planned for the next phase in our research and innovation strategy ambitions with our 2021-22 priorities including performance, profile and staff capacity.
	
	Members and attendees commented as follows:
	
	• The link between civic engagement and research, innovation and enterprise was highlighted.

3 FOR INFORMATION

183	NONE

4 ADDITIONAL MATTERS

184	**How have we made a positive impact on our students today?** It was agreed that discussions around student achievement and progression, and around the approach to KPIs more generally, were key for the student experience.
185	**Any additional matters:** • Sally McGill informed the Committee about a recent incident on campus relating to the sewerage system, which had now been resolved. Sally gave an overview of the context, the actions taken and the current position.

186	**Items to be referred to Board of Governors:**
	
	For information
	  a) **Minute 173** – Evaluating delivery of the University's Strategic Plan – innovative and applied learning
	  b) **Minute 174** – KPI report
	  c) **Minute 175** – Student progression report (outcomes and attainment)
	  d) **Minute 178** – League table performance report
	
	For approval
	  e) **Minute 171** – Committee Terms of Reference 2020-21

187	**Next meeting:** Tuesday 23 February 2021 (Boardroom, University House)