

NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY/STUDENTS' UNION PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE

Monday 14 October 2024, 9.30-11.30

Bamburgh Room, Hadrian Building

MINUTES

PRESENT: Mags Scott (Chair), Jasmine Banks (Education Officer), Colin Campbell (Registrar), Nick Collins (Chief Financial Officer), Chris Day (VC and President), Leo David (NUSU President), Alex Duggan (AU Officer), Iain Garfield (Director of Estates and Facilities), Lindsey Lockey (NUSU Chief Executive), David Miller (NUSU Trustee, Jane Robinson (PVC Engagement and Place), Hisham Salamathullah (Welfare and Equality Officer), Gail Moore (Committee Secretary).

APOLOGIES: Lucy Backhurst (Academic Registrar and Director of Student Services), Ruth Valentine (PVC Education), Kathryn Scott (People Services Business Partner).

1. **Welcome and introductions**

Mags Scott had been appointed as Chair of Partnership Committee and was welcomed to her first meeting.

2. **Notes from the last meeting**

Received, as Document A, the notes of the meeting held on 8 July 2024.

Resolved that, the minutes be agreed as an accurate record, with one minor amendment.

3. **Matters Arising from the Minutes and Action Log Review**

Received as Document B, the log of open actions from previous meetings.

Noted;

i. Student Minds Charter

Hisham Salamathullah, Welfare and Equality Officer, gave an update on the Student Minds accreditation. An evidence gathering exercise was being undertaken, there was no exact timescale for submission but it was planned for the 24/25 academic year.

ii. Students In Newcastle Forum (SINF)

Jane Robinson, PVC Engagement and Place noted that a meeting for both Newcastle and Northumbria universities with the Chief Executive of Newcastle City Council had been rescheduled for December. Reps from both universities were working together on a proposal, detailing a suggested future approach.

iii. Study Spaces

Iain Garfield, Director of Estates and Facilities, gave an update on the Study Space Working Group. University Executive Board had accepted an overview proposal which included a new Estates Principles Group with representation from each Faculty and from Student Services.

4. Terms of Reference and Relationship Agreement

Received, as Document C, the draft NUSU / Newcastle University 2024/25 Relationship Agreement including a review of the terms of reference for the committee.

Noted;

- i. The Head of the Learning Teaching Development Service had been added to the terms of reference of the Operations Group.
- ii. That, once agreed, the governance for the Sports Partnership Governance Group would be incorporated into the relationship agreement.

Resolved;

That the relationship agreement be signed.

5. NUSU Impact Report

Received as Document D, the latest NUSU Impact Report for 23/24.

Noted;

- i. NUSU is entering the penultimate year of its four year strategy.
- ii. Students continue to maintain high levels of engagement with NUSU and remain positive about their experiences, with 98% of students satisfied and 89% agreeing that they would recommend NUSU to a friend.
- iii. Sports teams have exceeded expectations, with an 8th place finish in BUCS and high participation in give it a go activities.
- iv. Lindsey Lockey, NUSU CEO advised that she was considering whether the full brochure style Impact Report was necessary in future, due to the resource invested in this activity during a busy period. The committee were positive about the current report but supportive of Lindsey exploring other options.

6. NUSU Operational Plan

Received as Document E, the NUSU 24/25 Operational Plan.

Noted;

- i. NUSU are undertaking a strategic refresh and financial review to position themselves to be responsive to changing needs and challenges.
- ii. The operational plan is a culmination of the high level KPIs which have been pared back in comparison to previous years, to reduce strain on NUSU colleagues in challenging times and to also promote a culture of shared responsibility for objectives.
- iii. New KPIs included a bar income target of over £1m but included less new project-focussed KPIs and more expectation setting about business as usual activity.
- iv. All objectives were currently rated green.

7. NUSU 2024/25 Budget

Received as Document F a report on the 2024/25 budget summary plan.

Noted;

- i. The year-end deficit for 23/24 was anticipated to be around £30k less than the forecasted deficit at Q3. This was based on improved bar income and holiday pay adjustments in addition to in-year budget management measures via a recruitment freeze and an additional grant. The audit approved report will be submitted to the next meeting.

- ii. The current reserves are £192k but 24/25 is expected to be another difficult year financially.
- iii. Analysis of Freshers' Week has not yet been completed but an alternative approach had been implemented, including more but smaller scale events with less financial risk. Many events were sold out but evaluation will include analysis of attrition rates.
- iv. Co op loyalty schemes, which as a franchise, it is obliged to offer are continuing to negatively impact the trading company.
- v. At the NUSU Board in December Lindsey Lockey will present the outcomes of the pay review, new staffing structure and financial projections. This will then be presented to Partnership Committee in January.
- vi. No decision had been taken regarding implementation of the pay award. A 4% increase was included in the subvention grant but the UCEA agreed increase averages at less than this (depending on grade). Lindsey Lockey reported that other SU's don't necessarily align with the university's pay awards, Nick Collins advised that any change to the current format would need careful consideration due to the impact on planning assumptions.
- vii. There was discussion about the presentation of the budget including where ringfencing should and should not be applied. This will be referred to the NUSU Director of Finance.
- viii. It was identified that there may be untapped income via merchandise sales although international sales e.g. to China remained prohibitive due to postage costs, it was agreed that a publicly accessible retail outlet may be an option.

Resolved

NUSU restructure plan and budget projections to be brought to the next meeting.

Lindsey Lockey to discuss the option of a merchandise outlet being included in L1 King's Gate with Naomi Oosman-Watts, Director of Student Success.

8. University Finances

Noted that, NUSU requested a discussion on measures to mitigate the impact of University budget management on student experience.

- i. Chris Day, VC, confirmed that £20m of savings are needed within this budget year, with a further identification of long term savings to follow. University Executive Board are committed to protecting student experience and education and also protecting the sustainability agenda.
- ii. Projects such as the SU Building refurbishment have been paused.
- iii. NUSU colleagues emphasised the need for collaboration when University colleagues are entering into agreements with companies for sponsorship or activities to ensure there is no detriment to existing relationships.

9. NUSU President's Report

Received as Document G, a report from, NUSU President, Leo David on planned activities. Noted;

Leo noted that the new Sabbatical Officer team had joined following a year of very positive student engagement but with multiple and ongoing unprecedented challenges. The new team were dedicated to supporting students through all matters but particularly in response

to on campus protests, national riots and with the continued pressures of students of the cost of living. Key activities included;

- i. Affordable food schemes
- ii. Attending parliament as part of the NUS lobby day
- iii. Implementation of the new education strategy
- iv. Training for the student media team
- v. Rolling out new sports kit following the sponsorship agreement with Castore.

10. Operations Group Update

Received as Document H, the notes of the Ops Group Meeting on 24 September.

Noted;

- i. There had been discussion at the Ops Group about initiations and dangerous behaviour and there had been further instances since. Lindsey Lockey had asked for the 2019 recommendations agreed following a student death, to be reviewed and reconfirmed.
- ii. Alex Duggan, AU Officer, advised that reporting levels remain low and more support is needed to help reporters and also to ensure that action taken as a result of reported instances has a consistent and agreed approach between NUSU and the University.
- iii. Since the discussion aligned with a peak time for initiations, it was agreed that more immediate action was required in addition to a medium term review of actions and Colin Campbell agreed to speak with Sally Ingram about next steps to support immediate interventions in collaboration with NUSU.

Resolved

Feedback on continuation of the 2019 student dangerous behaviours prevention action plan to be provided at the next meeting.

Colin Campbell to speak with Sally Ingram about next steps to support immediate interventions in collaboration with NUSU.

11. Code of Practice

Received as Document J, the most recent version of the NUSU Code of Practice.

No comments were received.

12. Sports Partnership Governance Group

Noted;

- i. The first meeting of this group had now been scheduled.
- ii. The group was formed as an action from the sport review with the aim of improving coordination and collaboration between University Sport and NUSU.
- iii. A performance sport review was currently being undertaken. Alex Duggan, AU Officer noted that this would result in an agreed criteria for performance sports to support elite students but also to enable a student led sport approach.
- iv. It was agreed that the new group could also support a discussion and agreement on; the development of facilities, availability of current facilities (e.g. impact on student groups when facilities are rented out to generate income) and other income opportunities such as sponsorship and major giving.

Resolved

That the terms of reference be brought to the next meeting of Partnership Committee.

Chris Day, and Alex Duggan (plus NUSU rep) to meet with Paul Tyack, Director of NU Advancement to discuss income generation in sport.

13. Any other business

There was no additional business.

14. Meeting Dates

Thursday 23 January 10-12

Thursday 20 March 10-12

Monday 7 July 11.30-13.30