

NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY

REPORT FROM AUDIT, RISK AND ASSURANCE COMMITTEE TO COUNCIL

18 July 2024

For information:

1. RISK MANAGEMENT

Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee received an update on Newcastle Apartheid Off Campus encampment protest on Union Lawn next to the Northern Stage building. A detailed operational risk and a proposed strategic approach to managing the encampment had been developed to help support decision making and agreed by Executive Board on 2 July.

The Committee noted that this year's National Student Survey results had been released on 10 July. Positivity measures across all themes had increased and the University had seen a slight improvement in its ranking in the Russell Group.

The Committee received an update from Professor Jane Robinson, Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Engagement and Place, and Andrea Henderson, Head of Engagement on Strategic Risk 6 (Engagement and Place). To drive business engagement and growth, the Arrow programme was one example of a successful collaborative programme with other North East universities. In terms of policy impact, the University was working closely with the new North East Mayoral Combined Authority, had established the NU Policy brand, collaborating with a public affairs agency to engage nationally on key research strengths. The University held a Gold National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement (NCCPE) Engage Watermark in recognition of its outstanding commitment to public engagement.

The Committee received an update from Nick Collins, Chief Financial Officer, on Strategic Risk 9 (Financial Sustainability). The University had assessed a set of simple scenarios which give rise to an increasingly severe impact on our finances. The University budget had been planned on the basis that it could broadly accommodate the low and moderate severity downside scenarios (up to 5% loss of total tuition fee income) through pre-identified actions and without significant detrimental impact to our core operations. Implications for capital projects that were in-flight and those not yet started had been considered. Work on financial sustainability and sector opportunities and responding and adapting to change, conducted by PwC, had been considered by the University in scenario-planning.

2. EXTERNAL AUDIT UPDATES

Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee received an update from Stephen Reid, Partner, Ernst & Young and Claire Mellons, Senior Manager, Ernst & Young, regarding the external audit strategy for the year ending 31 July 2024.

The Committee received an update from Anna Munro, Director of Financial Control and it was noted that Finance Committee had endorsed the proposed disclosure of critical accounting judgements and estimates for inclusion within the Annual Report and Financial Statements for 2023/24.

3. INTERNAL AUDIT UPDATES

The Committee received an update from Jess Fogarty, Head of Internal Audit and noted good progress had been made in delivering the 2023/24 internal audit plan.

4. FINANCE UPDATES

Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee received the Project Scorecard report from Nick Collins, Chief Financial Officer.

5. OFFICE FOR STUDENTS

Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee received an update on reportable events submitted by the University.

6. NUIT UPDATES

The Committee received a report from Clair Elliot, Director of NUIT, Jason Smith, Cyber Security Programme Director and Jason Bain, Chief Information Security Officer on information security governance and cyber security programme delivery progress.