

NATIONAL FILM AND TELEVISION SCHOOL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS HELD ON TUESDAY 26th SEPTEMBER 2023 AT NFTS BEACONSFIELD.

Present: Sophie Turner Laing (Chair), Joe Bradbury-Walters, Polly Cochrane, Geoffrey Crossick, Scott Forrest, Patrick Fuller, Oli Hyatt, Ollie Madden, Pukar Mehta, Max Pederson, Laurent Samama, Mary Stiasny, Hilary Strong, Jon Wardle, Miranda Wayland, and Caroline Silver by Zoom.

Apologies: Phil Edgar-Jones, Caroline Hollick, Andrew Macdonald, Charlotte Moore, Adil Ray, Bal Samra

In attendance: Stephen Louis (Chair NFTS Foundation), Gillian Carr, Trevor Hall, John Lee (Staff rep designate), Mark Readman, Eleanor Wheal, and Sue Vertue (Chair CILG) by Zoom.

Clerk: Chris Wensley

Declaration of Personal Interests: None.

The Chair welcomed Polly Cochrane and Caroline Silver attending their first meeting, John Lee observing as the incoming Staff Governor from November, and Stephen Louis, Chair NFTS Foundation, attending as an observer. The Chair thanked Joe Bradbury-Walters, the out-going Staff Governor, for his valued contribution during his tenure. She also proposed that Caroline Silver and Laurent Samama, Chairs of the Audit and F&GP Committees respectively, should become joint Deputy Chairs of the Board, and this was agreed by the Board.

1. Minutes of Previous Meeting

1.1 Minutes of the Last Meeting

It was noted that the minutes should be amended to include Sustainability as an enabler KPI.

The minutes of the previous Board of Governors Meeting held on 20th June 2023 were then approved as an accurate record.

1.2 Actions.

It was noted that the action point *to include a disability KPI to be monitored as an enabler KPI* would be on the agenda of the November meeting.

1.3 Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

2. Updates from Committees

2.1 Minutes from F&GP Committee.

Laurent Samama presented the minutes of the meeting held on 12th September 2023. He advised that the Board could be assured that the School was a going concern, and that all other significant items discussed were on the Board agenda.

2.2 Minutes from Audit Committee.

Pukar Mehta presented the minutes of the meeting held on 12th September 2023. He drew attention to the Committee's discussions about the School's use of NDAs; the risks and opportunities of AI; cyber security, and HE-sector concerns; and the Internal Auditors' assessment of the School's system of controls and processes. Geoff Crossick asked about the School's use of NDAs in compromise agreements, and Jon Wardle explained that these were only used in very limited circumstances.

Polly Cochrane suggested that the School might consider hosting an industry convention on the risks and benefits of AI for the creative sector. The Board congratulated Management on achieving substantial assurance from the Internal Auditors that the School maintained “*adequately designed and effective arrangements for risk management, control and governance, and economy, efficiency and effectiveness*”.

2.3 Minutes from Creative Industries Liaison Group - CILG

Sue Vertue reported that the two main items discussed at the meeting had been apprenticeships and the proposed re-structuring of the editing course. She added that the CILG considered that apprenticeships in the creative industries had so far been unsatisfactory, and that a challenge was to make them relevant and valuable for SMEs. With regard to the editing proposal, the Group welcomed the proposals and discussed the proposed course content and structure and possible recruitment challenges. The Group had also discussed mentoring and an online interface for graduates and employers to communicate.

The Board discussed how better to integrate Games into the CILG discussions.

2.4 New NEOM Contract – incl Report from Ethics Advisory Group.

Jon Wardle reminded the Board of the current arrangements with NEOM to provide training for Saudi Arabian students, and outlined current discussions with NEOM about how this might be taken forward in 2023/24 and some of the challenges this posed.

The Board discussed engaging with countries whose values differed from those of the School, and Geoff Crossick reported on the deliberations of the Ethics Advisory Group that had concluded that, because of the benefits of engagement as well as opportunities for course participants, it was ethically acceptable to deliver the course regardless of venue.

Laurent Samama considered that since the Corporate Plan did not include offering courses in countries other than the UK, any such developments would be a distraction.

The Board endorsed the School's current position that it was unable to deliver the course in Saudi Arabia for operational reasons, but that it was willing to continue to deliver courses for NEOM online and in the UK, as at present.

2.5 Anti-Discrimination Group Progress Report

Gillian Carr described progress made by the Anti-Discrimination group, and outlined the updated action plans for its anti-racism and trans work and disabled talent commitment.

3. Operational Reports

3.1 Director's Report

The Director reported on his activities from June to September 2023. He drew particular attention to anticipated funding from the planned auction of costumes and props from a major UK TV series to fund future scholarships; and the very popular programme of free online seminars and workshops for freelancers, provided jointly with the BBC and Channel 4.

He also reported on progress made to date towards achieving the School's vision, objectives and goals for the year 2023/24, and drew attention to the challenge of maintaining the appropriate balance between UK and international student recruitment for the MA courses.

Patrick Fuller highlighted that there were other opportunities for UK students to engage with the School, for example Certificates, apprenticeships and hub courses. Geoff Crossick and Mary Stiasny offered to put the Director in touch with colleagues in other HEIs trying to address similar challenges.

RESOLVED: To discuss recruitment issues at the November Board Strategy Day.

3.2 Finance Director's Report

Trevor Hall updated the Committee on the School's financial performance for the year to 31 July 2023, subject to external audit. He confirmed that performance for the year was ahead of budget and that the School's finances remained robust and sustainable.

The Board noted the financial performance for the year ended 31/07/2023.

3.3 Student Union Report

Max Pederson reported a range of activities that the SU had organised or supported, and outlined a series of events that were planned for the next few months. He added that the SU was focused on developing more specialist interest societies, and better supporting students who are carers or parenting. He advised that addressing student stress was a priority for the SU, and the Board discussed techniques for preventing stress and burnout in the industry from which lessons might be learnt.

Hilary Strong suggested that it would be useful to have feedback from the SU on student take-up of initiatives to address the cost-of-living crisis.

The Board thanked Max for his report.

3.4 Staff Survey Results

Gillian Carr presented the results of the 2023 Staff Survey, conducted in partnership with BECTU. She advised that the results were encouraging, with an increase in overall satisfaction, and improvements in key areas of focus from last year including bullying and harassment and awareness and support of the School's Corporate plan.

Scott Forrest asked about the overall participation rate, and the Board discussed initiatives to increase participation.

4. Strategic Plan Update

4.1 Update on Apprenticeships

Eleanor Wheal described progress to date and required actions for the School to develop a suite of apprenticeships, one of the commitments in the new Corporate Plan.

She reported that the School had appointed an Apprenticeship Development Manager, and she provided a case study of the development of a Level 4 apprenticeship with a major company. She also explained that the School was exploring creative industry apprenticeships not only for new entrants, but also as staff development for existing employees.

Sophie Turner Laing hoped that some apprenticeships might act as feeders into full-time campus courses, and also raised the issue of better engaging SMEs with apprenticeships.

Geoff Crossick warned of the reputational damage if the apprenticeship initiative encountered major problems, advised that apprenticeships nationally have very high drop-out rates, and drew attention to the wide range of levels proposed from Level 3, A Level, to Level 7, Post Graduate.

Jon Wardle reassured the Board that the School was proceeding very cautiously through various pilot schemes. Mary Stiasny offered to put him in touch with other HEI colleagues who have developed similar programmes.

4.2 Update on Scotland Growth and Development

Jon Wardle provided details of the plan to grow and deepen the impact of NFTS Scotland, and of a potential partner for the work of the hub.

He explained how the plans for Scotland integrated with the wider plans to grow the NFTS nations and regions provision, and he described the enablers and investment that would be required.

4.3 Strategy Day Planning

The Chair provided details of the Strategy Day which would be held on 8th November from 2pm. She outlined the priorities for the agenda, and invited proposals from Board members for other agenda items and possible guest speakers.

5. Reports

5.1 Curriculum and Short Course Report

Mark Readman updated the Board on key curriculum activity since the last meeting, including updates on short courses, the operation of the full-time curriculum, development of new courses, academic standards, complaints and appeals, partnerships and recruitment. He drew particular attention to the proposal to radically re-structure the editing programme.

The Board noted the report, and was pleased to see the increasing activity in the hubs.

5.2 2022/23 KPIs review

Trevor Hall updated members on performance against the School's Key Performance Indicators for 2022/23, the final year of the previous Strategic Plan. The Board again discussed how to attract more UK students from lower socio-economic groups, and it was agreed that it was important for outreach activities to stress the availability of bursaries. It was noted that the current socio-economic KPI did not include activities in the hubs, apprenticeships etc., and the Board endorsed the F&GP Committee proposal that Management should investigate presenting, alongside the statistics for students from lower socio-economic groups for MA and Diploma courses, the numbers on all School activities, including courses in the hubs and Certificate courses, as well as potential apprenticeships.

5.3 Annual Risk Register Report

Trevor Hall updated members on the change of risks to the School, as monitored by Audit Committee on behalf of the Board, over the last 12 months.

Caroline Silver said that, as Chair of the Audit Committee, she would work with Management to develop a paper for the Board detailing the School's tolerance and appetite for emerging risks.

5.4 Annual H&S Report

Jon Wardle reported on Health & Safety over the last year and advised that there had been no major issues.

The Board discussed the report, and was pleased to note another relatively safe year of operations.

5.5 Annual Review of Board Terms of Reference

The Board reviewed its terms of reference. It was agreed that reference to financial and environmental sustainability and academic quality should be highlighted, and that the ToR might be presented more succinctly.

ACTION: Chris Wensley to present revised Board Terms of Reference to a future meeting.

5.6 Annual report on compliance with the OfS Conditions of Registration

Eleanor Wheal presented a mapping document demonstrating how the Board could be assured that the School's complies with the OfS Conditions of Registration.

5.7 Updated OfS B3 student outcomes data

Eleanor Wheal explained that the OfS Regulatory Framework contains a Condition of Registration that requires that each provider 'must deliver successful outcomes for all of its students, which are recognised and valued by employers, and/or enable

further study'. HEIs must reach thresholds for continuation, completion and progression. She reported that the NFTS MAs had comfortably exceeded the threshold for each indicator. She also advised that some students on F/T Diplomas struggled to describe specific production roles, for example Production Secretary, in appropriate professional terms, and that the importance of doing this would be discussed with students as they prepared to leave the School.

6. Any Other Business

6.1 Board Review

The Chair advised that there would be a review of the operation of the Board in January 2024.

7. Date of Next Meeting:

This was confirmed as Tuesday 28th November 2023 at 10.30am at the NFTS, Beaconsfield.

8. Board Briefing

Cody Updegrave, a student from the Creative Business course, explained the course's aims and operation, and he described collaborations with other courses, and showed examples of work produced.

The Board thanked Cody for a very interesting presentation.