

## NATIONAL FILM AND TELEVISION SCHOOL

### **MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS HELD ON TUESDAY 23<sup>rd</sup> NOVEMBER 2021 AT THE NFTS.**

**Present:** Patrick McKenna (Chair), Ian Lewis (Deputy Chair), Joe Bradbury-Walters, Geoffrey Crossick, Rose Garnett, Sara Geater, Danielle Goff, Oli Hyatt, Andrew Macdonald, Pukar Mehta, Laurent Samama, Bal Samra, Mary Stiasny, Hilary Strong, Sue Vertue, Jon Wardle (Director), and Caroline Hollick until 10.30.

**In attendance:** Trevor Hall (FD), Chris Wensley (Clerk).

**Apologies:** Phil Edgar-Jones, Patrick Fuller, Adil Ray, Eleanor Wheal (Registrar), Colin Young.

**Declaration of Personal Interests:** None declared.

#### **1. Board Briefing.**

The meeting opened with an account of the launch and establishment of NFTS Cymru Wales by the Head of the Centre, Judith Winnan. She described courses that were currently offered and the useful relationships with the other hubs.

The Board thanked Judith for her interesting presentation.

#### **2. Minutes of Previous Meeting**

##### 2.1 Minutes of the Last Meeting

The minutes of the previous Board of Governors Meeting held on 5<sup>th</sup> October 2021 were approved as an accurate record.

##### 2.2 Actions

*2.2.1 The Director to set up a working party to develop a mid-term strategy for the national and regional hubs; membership: Bal Samra and Andrew Macdonald, and others to be advised.*

Jon Wardle explained that the group was meeting the following day, and comprised Bal Samra, Andrew Macdonald and Ian Lewis. He would report back to the March meeting of the Board.

It was noted that all other actions were dealt with elsewhere in the agenda.

##### 2.3 Matters Arising.

There were none.

#### **3. Context Setting and Updates.**

##### 3.1 Degree Awarding Powers Update

Jon Wardle updated the Board on the School's application for degree awarding powers.

He explained that the School had submitted detailed responses to the assessment team's draft report which had been considered by the appropriate QAA committees. As a result, the QAA was reviewing the matter, and a sub-committee would be meeting with representatives from the School.

He added that the School had initiated some changes as a result of the initial report, including the planned appointment of a Director of Curriculum.

##### 3.2 Director's Report

The Director reported on his activities since 1<sup>st</sup> October.

With reference to student recruitment for the September 2021 and January 2022 intake, he pointed out that:

- All September 2021 courses had hit their targets, with three courses exceeding their targets.
- For January 2022 entry, 23 courses had met or would shortly meet their targets; 2 courses had exceeded their targets; and 5 courses were predicted to miss their targets.
- Application deadlines had been extended and additional marketing strategies had been put in place for these courses.
- Predicted enrolments for January 2022 suggested the School would exceed budget which would provide capacity for any withdrawals during the year.

He also reported that:

- the School was advertising for a Director of Curriculum, to provide strategic academic leadership, and support for the development and delivery of the school's learning and teaching priorities (see 3.1 above);
- the OfS had approved an application for funding for Production Lighting to replace the School's ageing stock with LED lighting;
- the Storyfutures Academy team had released the findings of their Virtual Production Skills Report providing a map of the roles and skills that are in demand across the film and television industry;
- the School had started drafting its application for a continuation of the OfS Institution Specific Funding, awarded to small specialist institutions that can evidence that they are 'world leading' and have higher costs per student than larger institutions due to the practical nature of their offer and their scale.

There was discussion about the role of the new Director of Curriculum and Jon Wardle stressed that the person appointed would take much of the responsibility for the day-to-day running of the courses, allowing him to spend more time on strategic matters.

Mary Stiasny and Geoff Crossick stressed that adherence to high academic and professional standards, as required by the OfS, was critical for success, and felt that the new appointment could strengthen the Management team, working closely with the Director and Registrar.

The Board noted the report.

### 3.3 Finance Director's Report

Trevor Hall updated the Board on the School's financial performance since the last meeting which was better than budget, in part because of underspends on production and support costs, and savings on maintenance spend.

He explained that the School remained on track to meet its budget surplus for 2021/22, and that now the decision had been taken to hold the next Gala in June 2022, he was able to allocate some of the current Gala funding to provide additional bursaries.

The Board noted the report.

### 3.4 Student Union Report

Danielle Goff advised that the election for the new SU President would be held shortly. She also reported on student social events, both recent and planned, an excellent widening access event that had been held at the School, and progress with the anti-racism agenda. She suggested that the School should establish a named point of contact for inclusion and diversity issues of all types.

Jon Wardle advised that a group led by Adil Ray, had been reviewing this and other related issues, including the effectiveness of the School's anti-racism policies.

The Board thanked Danielle and, since this was her last meeting, expressed its thanks for her valuable Board reports over the past year.

**ACTION: Jon Wardle to convene a meeting of a small group of governors in early 2022 to review the Anti-Racism activity and report, to look at the implications for wider inclusivity and diversity issues across the School, and to report to the March meeting.**

#### **4. Strategy and Governance.**

##### 4.1 OfS Matters

##### 4.1.1 Annual Accountability Return.

##### 4.1.1.1 Audited Financial Statements

Trevor Hall presented the statutory Accounts for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> July 2021. He explained that the only point highlighted by BDO concerned the presentation of scholarship funding – which had been addressed.

He explained that the financial statements had been reviewed by the F&GP and Audit Committees and recommended to the Board for approval.

He also drew members attention to the following sources of assurance when reviewing the financial statements:

- Audit Completion Report
- Internal Audit Annual Report
- Letter of Representation

The Board noted that the next items 4.1.1.2/3/4 gave it assurance that the School had effective arrangements for financial management, risk management and delivering value for money.

##### 4.1.1.2 External Audit Completion Report

Trevor Hall presented the Management Letter which had had been scrutinised at the Audit Committee. He was pleased to advise that the external audit was substantially complete and that the auditors proposed to issue an unmodified ('clean') audit opinion.

##### 4.1.1.3 Audit Committee Report

Trevor Hall introduced the report which reviewed the adequacy and effectiveness of the NFTS's arrangements for:

- Risk management, control and governance;
- Value for money;
- The management and quality assurance of data.

The report confirmed that the Committee was satisfied that there were effective:

- processes for identifying, evaluating and managing significant risks;
- control and governance arrangements;
- processes to deliver value for money;
- systems to ensure the validity of the data submitted to HESA, the Office for Students, the Student Loan Company, Research England and other bodies;

and that therefore the Committee was able to confirm to the Board that its responsibilities had been satisfactorily discharged.

#### 4.1.1.4 Internal Auditor's Annual Report

Trevor Hall reported that overall for the year ended 31 July 2021, the internal auditors had been able to provide satisfactory assurance that the School maintained adequately designed and effective arrangements for risk management, control and governance, and economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

#### 4.1.1.5 Annual Financial Return Update

Trevor Hall advised the Board that, as last year, the OfS had proposed a revised timetable to submit 5-year forecasts because of the impact of the pandemic on HEIs.

### **RESOLVED:**

- **To authorise the Chair to sign the financial statements and letter of representation for the year ended 31 July 2021 on behalf of the Board.**
- **To note the revised submission timeline and invite F&GP to scrutinise the OfS five-year forecast and commentary on behalf of the Board;**
- **To delegate authority to the Board Chair to approve the submission of the five-year forecast to meet the OfS March 2022 deadline.**

#### 4.1.1.6 Prevent Accountability Return

Jon Wardle presented the annual Prevent Data Return and Accountability Statement, prepared for the Office for Students. He explained that the OfS had revised the reporting and data requirements, and that there were no significant issues in the report. To enable the Chair to sign the declarations, he advised of the following mechanisms by which the Chair can be assured that he is able to sign the declarations satisfactorily:

- Prevent is a standing item on the agenda of the School's Audit Committee.
- In 2020/21 there were no incidents to report.
- The School's Director reported regularly to the Board on the activity of the School's Academic Standards Committee which oversees the implementation of the Prevent Duty within the School.

Pukar Mehta asked if all staff had received training and Jon Wardle confirmed that this was so.

**RESOLVED: The Chair of the Board to sign the Prevent Annual Report for submission to the OfS together with the data.**

#### 4.2 Quality Assurance Evaluation Report

Geoffrey Crossick presented to the Board the recommendations and minutes of the extraordinary meeting of the School's Academic Standards Committee on 21<sup>st</sup> July 2021 which had considered the annual Quality Assurance Evaluation Report.

He advised that he had chaired the meeting, with four other Board members in attendance. They confirmed that they were satisfied with the QA processes and that the Board could be assured of the quality of the student academic experience, student outcomes and the standards of the School's awards. The Board noted the report.

### **5. Committee Reports**

#### 5.1 Minutes from F&GP Committee

Ian Lewis presented the minutes of the meeting held on 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2021.

He reported that in addition to items also on the Board agenda, the Committee had reviewed the donations policy, and he confirmed that any donations giving cause for concern would be referred to the Ethics Group for consideration. The Committee had also confirmed that the School could proceed with another contract for training Saudi Arabian students.

With regard to the staff survey, he explained that BECTU had asked for the questions to be reviewed, but the Committee had stressed that it was the Board's survey, and that while happy to receive proposals from the Union, the Board made final decisions on the nature of the survey. It was very useful to be able to compare results from previous years and so consistency of questions was important. However, it had been agreed that the survey should continue annually, and that for the 2022 survey, the School should refresh questions where necessary, add any appropriate new questions, carry out the survey, and subsequently review the process with the F&GP Committee.

Pukar Mehta asked about the Saudi students who had completed their courses in 2021, and Jon Wardle explained that the male/female ratio of the cohort had been roughly equal and that all had been excellent students.

The Board noted the minutes.

#### 5.2 Minutes from Audit Committee

Sara Geater presented the minutes of the meeting held on 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2021. She reported that in addition to items also on the Board agenda, the Committee had received a substantial assurance internal audit on the student experience, and that the internal audit plan for 2021/22 had been reviewed and additional days were being considered to complete an increased number of areas for review.

The Board noted the minutes.

#### 5.3 Report from GAR Committee

Bal Samra reported that the Committee had discussed progress with the recruitment of a new chair for September 2022, as well as Board and Committee membership and the need for an additional Board member for the Audit Committee. It had also confirmed the revised criteria for senior staff remuneration, and it had reviewed the Annual Trustee Declaration of Interests to assure itself that all Trustees had completed a return, and that there were no issues identified which warranted further investigation. Therefore, the Committee was pleased to confirm that all members were 'fit and proper persons' for the purposes of Board membership. The Board noted the actions.

### **6. Operational Matters**

#### 6.1 Curriculum and Short Course Report

Jon Wardle updated the Board on key curriculum activity since the last meeting. He reported on the operation of the full-time curriculum, the development of new courses, the delivery of short courses, developments at national and regional hubs, the deliberations of the Academic Standards Committee, and complaints and misconduct.

He advised that the current term had been as close to normal as possible, with a major focus upon those students finishing their courses this year, so that they had a positive finish after a year disrupted by Covid. Also, he reported that the School was expanding its successful personalised coaching programme for directors and producers.

Bal Samra noted that there was increased production activity in Northern Ireland, and offered to put the School in touch with potential partners to develop new training initiatives.

The Board noted the report.

#### **6.2 NFTS Fellowship**

Jon Wardle advised that annually the NFTS Board of Governors awarded an NFTS Honorary Fellowship in recognition of outstanding contribution to the British film, television and games industries. He explained that the GAR Committee had discussed the proposed names and had recommended Charlotte Moore to the Board for the 2022 Fellowship.

**RESOLVED: To invite Charlotte Moore to become the 2022 NFTS Fellow.**

#### **7. Any Other Business**

There was none.

**8. Date of Next Meeting:** This was confirmed as Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2022 at 09.30 by Zoom.