

Witness Name: Benjamin Rothwell

Statement No: WITN0031001

Dated: 22 September 2025

THE NOTTINGHAM INQUIRY

FIRST WITNESS STATEMENT OF BENJAMIN ROTHWELL

I, Benjamin Rothwell, of the University of Nottingham, University Park, Nottingham, NG7 2RD (the “**University**”), will say as follows: -

INTRODUCTION

1. This witness statement is made to assist the Nottingham Inquiry (the “**Inquiry**”) with the matters set out in the Rule 9 Request dated 26 June 2025.
2. I am currently an Associate Professor in the Department of Engineering at the University.
3. Before I joined the University, I studied Aerospace Engineering (from undergraduate through to PhD) at the University of Leeds. Whilst studying for my PhD, I worked for British Aerospace Systems in Saudi Arabia for 20 months. When I started at the University in May 2016 (just before I graduated with my PhD (July 2016)), I was a research fellow and then transitioned into two part time contracts; 50% of my time was spent teaching and the other 50% as a research fellow.
4. I was appointed Associate Professor in 2021; this role also involves a mix of research and teaching. On the research side of things, my role involves leading research bids, writing articles for journals, and I also supervise PhD

students, providing them with pastoral care as part of this. On the teaching front, I lead the Aerospace Group Design Project (this is a Masters level project), also supervise first year undergraduate group projects on the Aerospace Engineering programmes (up until 2020, I also supervised the first year undergraduate group projects on the Mechanical Engineering programmes) and act as the Year 2 lead for the Aerospace programme. I am also the Student Liaison for Year 1 and Year 2 students which involves getting feedback from students and feeding it into the Department. I lecture and also supervise final year individual projects. I tend to have around 30-40 tutees a year and am a personal tutor to some of them, acting as their personal tutor from the start to the end of their University careers.

5. My role as personal tutor involves providing pastoral support to students. I meet with my personal tutees a minimum of three times a year and can offer them guidance and support, for example, by going through their exam results with them, helping them with extenuating circumstances and signposting them to others in the University as needed, such as Support and Wellbeing services, exam officers and year leads.

CHRONOLOGY

6. I have been asked to set out a chronological account of my contact with Valdo Calocane, who I will refer to as Valdo throughout this statement. I did not meet or have contact with any member of Valdo's family. In general, I would not expect to meet or have contact with a student's family, except perhaps on graduation days.
7. My first interaction with Valdo happened near the start of the 2019/20 academic year. Four students in his cohort had formed a project group. I don't know how this happened, but Valdo became part of the group (so that it was a group of five students) and they were allocated a heavy lift drone project that I was supervising along with Dr Mark Jabbal (I was the primary supervisor and Mark had very little interaction with the group) [UNIN0000746].

8. I had my first meeting with the group on 3 October 2019 [UNIN0001021]. I then continued to meet with the group once a week for the rest of the academic year. The meetings in the first semester took place in person, but then, after Covid hit in the second semester, we had to move the meetings online and also change the scope of the project, as it was no longer possible to obtain the parts needed to build the drone [UNIN0001633].
9. As far as I recall, Valdo attended the majority of the group project meetings, although I think he attended fewer meetings when the meetings shifted to being online due to Covid. My impression of Valdo was that he was a quiet workhorse, attentive and had answers to questions asked, so it was clear that he was doing the required work in the background. He seemed to get on with the other students in the group and I used to see them chatting together outside after our meetings. I did not observe or hear of any behaviour which gave me cause for concern. The group obtained a 2:1 classification for the project.
10. On 24 July 2020, I was copied into an e-mail from the extenuating circumstances panel to Valdo, informing him of the outcome of his extenuating circumstances claim of 1 June 2020 [UNIN0000840]. I glanced at this e-mail and did not take any further action in relation to it as it was not something for me to deal with, given that the project that Valdo had been working on with me had concluded.
11. After this, my only other contact relating to Valdo came in the 2021/22 academic year, in or around June 2022, after he decided to transfer from the MEng to the BEng and do an individual project based on the group project I had supervised him on in the 2019/20 academic year. As I had been the supervisor on the group project on which his individual project was based, Dr Alastair Campbell-Ritchie contacted me on 29 June 2022 by e-mail and asked me to be the second marker for the individual project report [UNIN0000527]. I wrote back to Alastair agreeing to act as a second pair of eyes [UNIN0000674] and he then sent me the draft report as well as a mark sheet

that he had already filled out [UNIN0001125]. My job was to review the report and let Alastair know if I agreed with his comments and conclusions. I carried out the review and let Alastair have my comments by e-mail on 29 June 2022 [UNIN0001273]. The last e-mail I had relating to Valdo was from 30 June 2022 in which Dr Campbell-Ritchie informed Valdo that his report was not yet at pass level [UNIN0000363]. After this, I did not hear anything from or about Valdo and he then graduated.

12. In terms of my contact with Valdo, I was not aware of any health or other issues that he may have had, and I was not aware that he had been admitted to hospital because of mental illness. If students are interacting with the Support and Wellbeing team, then the Department does not tend to find out what is happening, although if you ask the Support and Wellbeing team for information, it can be forthcoming. As a tutor, I know to signpost to our local Support and Wellbeing team and, as far as I am aware, it is then their job to pass students on to other University services if further support is needed. However, it is very dependent on the individual tutor as to how well students are signposted to support. I have been asked whether I think there is anything that could be implemented to ensure tutors and teaching staff are consistently taking action to facilitate support for students. I do not think there is anything else that could be implemented, we have adequate training which ensures that tutors and teaching staff know how to signpost effectively.

13. Whilst Valdo was a student at the University, I was not aware that he had any interactions with the police or the University security team. I am not aware of any complaints made to the University about Valdo's behaviour, or any Fitness to Study assessment of Valdo whilst at the University. Given my limited involvement in Valdo's academic studies, I would not expect to be made aware of these types of issues.

THE UNIVERSITY'S STUDENT WELLBEING SERVICES AND MENTAL HEALTH ADVISORY SERVICE

14. I have been asked what training I received. When you become an academic, you have to undertake mandatory training on tutoring and other responsibilities and are then expected to refresh this training every couple of years. The training is light touch, but tells you how to signpost students to other areas of the University and reinforces the message that the Support and Wellbeing services are there to help. I also undertook an optional University course called 'Tutoring the Tutor', which again had, amongst other things, a focus on signposting and helping students. I also attended in person training delivered by the University's Senior Tutor, the first part of which was scenario-based and talked about what you should do if a student presented with mental health difficulties or made a report of sexual assault or violence. Some of the training I have undertaken did cover what to do if a student posed a risk to the safety of others. I knew that in those circumstances I should call campus Security for assistance, not the police – this was because Security could direct the police as needed who might not otherwise know where to go. I found the training I did to be useful.

15. At the time, I used the student and Department handbooks [UNIN0001836, UNIN0001837, UNIN0001838, UNIN0001839], as well as the Department's Moodle pages [UNIN0001840], as my reference points for relevant policies and procedures. I found these to be useful and also had some charts printed out that I kept which contained helpful information.

16. At the time (2017 – 2022), my understanding of the role of the Support and Wellbeing service was that they could talk to students to try to help them when they were in difficulties and signpost them to other services. If a student came to me and said they were struggling mentally or because of family issues or financial difficulty – anything really that could affect their performance academically – I would tell them to talk to Support and Wellbeing services or refer them on myself. I interacted with the Support and Wellbeing services many times and found them to be very helpful.

17. I have not interacted much with the Mental Health Advisory Service ("MHAS")

beyond receiving a few e-mails from them about some of my students. I do not refer students to MHAS, I tell students to access Support and Wellbeing services if they are having difficulties and I know that Support and Wellbeing can then refer students on to MHAS. In the limited contact I have had with MHAS, I have found them to be helpful and several tutees of mine have spoken to me very positively of MHAS.

18. I have been asked what actions I would or could take at the time (2017-2022) if I had concerns about the mental health of a student. It would depend on how extreme the issue was. If a student was having a breakdown, I would call Security to come and help look after the student until other support arrived. If the issue seemed less critical, I would reach out to the senior tutor, who was very helpful and they could then talk through with the student the different options available to them, for example taking a voluntary interruption or putting in extenuating circumstances.

19. If I had concerns about the risk a student posed to the safety of others, the actions which I would or could have taken in 2017-2022 would or could have been to call University Security.

OBSERVATIONS

20. I have been asked to comment on whether I think I should have been told more about Valdo's behaviour while he was at the University, his mental illness and/or his interactions with the police and I don't think I should have been.

21. I have been asked to provide observations on additional actions the University or I could have taken, whether there are any structural issues, what recommendations I think the Chair of the Inquiry should make and whether I think there are any improvements that can be made to the sector generally or the University in terms of how they deal with acutely mentally ill students or those who pose a risk to the safety of others. It is difficult for me to provide

any observations on these matters as I do not have the full picture when it comes to Valdo and what has happened.

Statement of Truth

I believe the content of this statement to be true. I understand that proceedings may be brought against anyone who makes, or causes to be made, a false statement in a document verified by a statement of truth without an honest belief of its truth.

Signed: **GRO-B**

Dated: 22/09/25 _____

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No.	Inquiry URN	Document Description
1.	UNIN0000746	Email from Alastair Campbell Ritchie (UON) to Joel (UON), Jordan (UON), William (UON) and others, re: GDM Project Allocation 2019-20
2.	UNIN0001021	Email from Benjamin Rothwell [UoN] to Mark Jabbal [UoN], Joel [UoN], Jordan [UoN] and others, re: RE: GDM Group Project 2019-20
3.	UNIN0001633	Email from Alastair Campbell Ritchie [UoN] to students, re: MMME4085 Group Design and Make - 2019/2020 Coronavirus Mitigation
4.	UNIN0000840	Email from SS-EC-UPE to Valdo Mendes Calocane to Benjamin Rothwell, Stephen Pickering and Z-Assess, re: EC outcome – Valdo Mendes Calocane
5.	UNIN0000527	Email from Alastair Campbell Ritchie to Benjamin Rothwell Re: Fw: MMME3073 Individual Report
6.	UNIN0000674	Email from Benjamin Rothwell [University of Nottingham] to Alastair Campbell Ritchie [University of Nottingham] Re: MMME3073 Individual Report
7.	UNIN0001125	Email from Alastair Campbell Ritchie to Benjamin Rothwell, re: MMME3073 Individual Report
8.	UNIN0001273	Email from Benjamin Rothwell [UoN] to Alastair Campbell [UoN], re: RE: MMME3073 Individual Report
9.	UNIN0000363	Email from Alastair Campbell Ritchie (UON) to Valdo Mendes Calocane (UON), Stewart Mcwilliam (UON) and Benjamin Rothwell (UON), re: MMME3073
10.	UNIN0001836	M3 Handbook 2021v2

11.	UNIN0001837	M3 Handbook 2122_v1
12.	UNIN0001838	M3 Handbook1718v1
13.	UNIN0001839	M3 Handbook1920v1
14.	UNIN0001840	Module M3 Personal Tutors (UK) moodle Nottingham