

Witness Name: Samanta Piano

Statement No: WITN0049001

Dated: 22 September 2025

THE NOTTINGHAM INQUIRY

FIRST WITNESS STATEMENT OF SAMANTA PIANO

I, Samanta Piano, 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 hold an MSc (2003) and a PhD (2006) in Physics from the University of Salerno, Italy, where I also worked as a Research Fellow (2007–2009). In 2009, I moved to the University of Nottingham, holding successive research appointments in the School of Physics & Astronomy, including Marie Curie IEF Fellow (2009–2013) and Nottingham Research Fellow (2011–2013), followed by part-time roles as Research Fellow and Teaching Assistant (2013–2015). In 2015, I joined the Faculty of Engineering as Assistant Professor, progressing to Associate Professor (2022) and, since August 2023, I have been a Professor of Metrology in the Department of Mechanical, Materials and Manufacturing Engineering (“**M3**”). I also completed a Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education at the University in 2016. My interdisciplinary background combines physics and engineering, with a sustained focus on metrology, advanced manufacturing, and academic leadership.

3. My roles as Assistant and Associate Professor involved research and teaching, including giving lectures to students and these are also part of my role as a full Professor. In the past, I have been a Year Lead (which involved, amongst other things, advising students about coursework deadlines, exams and how learning outcomes can be fulfilled) and I was Deputy Senior Tutor for M3 from around September 2019 until July 2023.
4. As Deputy Senior Tutor, my role was to assist students who were experiencing difficulties, whether academic or otherwise (for example, they are not happy with the course they are on and want to change or they want to take a voluntary interruption of studies). The role involved assisting students and signposting them to the appropriate areas of the University for other assistance. Students usually came to me as Deputy Senior Tutor after a referral from their personal tutor, although it was also possible for students to come to me directly.
5. My roles as Assistant Professor, Associate Professor and Professor did not involve pastoral or wellbeing responsibilities, though I was a personal tutor as well when I undertook these roles which did involve pastoral duties. My role as Deputy Senior Tutor can involve signposting to pastoral and wellbeing support, as did the Year Lead role I undertook.

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. Given my limited involvement with Valdo, I would not expect to.
7. My interactions with Valdo were very limited. I actually only interacted with him on Teams, not in person, and then only just the once in November 2020 when I discussed his academic options with him and assisted him with the administration of interrupting his studies. I did this in my capacity as Deputy

Senior Tutor. The interaction I had with Valdo was too brief for me to have formed an impression of him. I did not observe or hear of any behaviour by Valdo that gave me cause for concern.

8. I was first contacted about Valdo on 4 November 2020 when the Senior Tutor, Dr Emma Barney, contacted me to pass on a referral from Valdo's personal tutor, Dr Stewart McWilliam, who had explained to Emma that Valdo needed to discuss a potential interruption of studies [UNIN0000492]. At the time, Valdo was at the start of Year 4 of his studies. After I had spoken to Emma about the matter, I e-mailed Emma and Stewart, in the evening of 4 November 2020, to let them know that Valdo also had the option to graduate with a BEng degree instead of interrupting and asked if I should discuss this option with Valdo [UNIN0001685]. Emma responded and said she thought it was an option worth mentioning but said "*I think for this student a complete rest may be the best approach*" [UNIN0001219]. Stewart also replied to my e-mail to say that he had already discussed with Valdo the possibility of downgrading to the BEng, but that Valdo was interested in interrupting instead [UNIN0000816].
9. I emailed Emma and Stewart on 5 November to confirm I would contact Valdo [UNIN0000504]. I e-mailed Valdo on 5 November 2020, telling him that Stewart had informed me of Valdo's decision to interrupt his studies, that I knew this was a difficult decision and asked him when he was available for a meeting [UNIN0001251]. My e-mail read as follows:

"Dear Valdo,

I hope you are well.

I am the deputy senior tutor and your personal tutor has informed us about your decision to interrupt your studies.

I know that it is a difficult decision, and we would like to support you during this period. Can you, please, let me know when you will available for a meeting this week?

I am free on Friday before 11.30 am or between 1pm and 3pm".

10. We arranged a meeting for 10am on 6 November 2020 [UNIN0000226]. This meeting took place online via Microsoft Teams [UNIN0001489, UNIN0001650].
11. I don't recollect exactly what we discussed, but at this meeting, I would have gone through the different options available to Valdo at that time. However, the meeting was a formality as he had already decided that he wanted to interrupt. Immediately after our meeting (just before 10.30am) on 6 November 2020, Valdo sent me a copy of the interruption form, highlighting that there was a section in it for the M3 department to sign [UNIN0000908, UNIN0000772]. In the interruption form, he cited 'mental fatigue' as the reason for interruption (I cannot recall if this was a reason he gave in our meeting for wanting to interrupt), with a proposed date of return of 25 September 2021 and a revised course completion date of July 2022.
12. On 10 November 2020, I signed off Valdo's interruption form (this is a 'tick box' exercise, a purely administrative task), then Valdo would have sent it for processing. The person who signs off the form does not get told whether the interruption has been approved so I cannot say for sure when Valdo's interruption commenced – that information probably went to Stewart McWilliam, as Valdo's personal tutor or Emma Barney as Senior Tutor for M3. Emma sent an e-mail to me and others on 11 November 2020 in which she said that Valdo had 'suspended' (by which I think she meant he had interrupted) [UNIN0000299]. There is part of the form which says that the University can request evidence or assessment before a return to study is approved, where the interruption has arisen from the Fitness to Study policy. I understood that this was a voluntary interruption process which had not arisen under the Fitness to Study policy, and so that section of the form did not need to be completed.
13. That was the last contact that I had with or about Valdo, I was not involved with his return to studies after his interruption.

14. At the time Valdo was a student, I was not aware he was suffering with mental illness whilst he was a student or that he had been admitted to hospital because of this. I was not aware that Valdo 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 with Valdo, I would not expect to be made aware of these types of issues.

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

15. When I became a personal tutor, I had induction training to assist with my understanding of this role and I had a teaching mentor with whom I could discuss any queries I had about the role. I also undertook mental health first aid training, it was a two-day course (3 – 4 April 2019). This gave me an understanding of how to talk to students in distress without saying anything inappropriate that might make a situation worse, direct them to next steps and what University support was available to them. I found this training to be useful.

16. At the time, M3's Moodle page for tutors contained helpful information, including about the handling of the welfare of students which I found useful [UNIN0001840]. I knew that the Faculty's Support and Wellbeing team was available for me to refer students to and I knew that I could also signpost students elsewhere depending on their issue.

17. At the time (2017 – 2022), my understanding of the role of the Support and Wellbeing service was that I could speak to them for advice and refer students to them and they could then meet and listen to the students and signpost them on to other services if needed. The circumstances in which I might seek the advice of, or refer a student to, Support and Wellbeing services would be, for example, if a student came to me in distress or there had been a lack of

engagement from a student. I had interacted with the Support and Wellbeing service on a number of occasions and I found them to be helpful and supportive.

18. At the time, I had not had cause to interact with MHAS. My understanding of the role of MHAS was that they could help students with mental health issues.

19. If I had concerns at the time about the mental health of a student, I would have contacted the Support and Wellbeing team in the first instance. They could then refer on to other services, such as MHAS, as needed.

20. If I had concerns at the time about the risk a student posed to the safety of others, I would or could have contacted the Support and Wellbeing team, spoken to senior colleagues or contacted the police.

OBSERVATIONS

21. I have been asked to comment on whether I think I should have been told more about Valdo's behaviour while at the University, his mental illness and/or his interactions with the police. I do not think I should have been told about these things, there would have been no need for me to know them and a student does have a right to privacy.

22. I have been asked to comment on whether I consider there are additional actions that I or the University could have taken in respect of Valdo or if there are any structural issues. Based on what I know, I do not think so.

23. I have been asked to comment on what recommendations I think the Chair of this Inquiry should make to ensure lessons are learned and to prevent similar attacks in the future, but I do not feel able to do so.

24. I have been asked what improvements I think could be made to the University or to the higher education sector generally in how they deal with acutely mentally ill students and / or students who pose a risk of safety to others.

Generally, I think we give our students a lot of support and the University should not be addressing issues that the police should be dealing with. However, it might be helpful for us to be provided with risk information about students by the police as this might assist us in the roles we undertake.

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: 22-09-2025 _____

Index to First Witness Statement of Samanta Piano

No.	Inquiry URN	Document Description
1.	UNIN0000492	Email from Emma Barney (UoN) to Samanta Piano (UoN) Re: FW: Valdo Mendes Calocane
2.	UNIN0001685	Email from Samanta Piano [University of Nottingham] to Emma Barney [University of Nottingham] and Stewart McWilliam [University of Nottingham], re: Valdo Mendes Calocane
3.	UNIN0001219	Email from Emma Barney to Samanta Piano and Stewart McWilliam, re: Valdo Mendes Calocane
4.	UNIN0000816	Email from Stewart McWilliam (UON) to Samanta Piano (UON) and Emma Barney (UON), Re: Valdo Mendes Calocane
5.	UNIN0000504	Email from Samanta Piano to Stewart McWilliam and Emma Barney Re: Valdo Mendes Calocane
6.	UNIN0001251	Email from Samanta Piano to Valdo Mendes Calocane, re: meeting
7.	UNIN0000226	Email from Samanta Piano [UoN] to Valdo Mendes Calocane Re: Meeting
8.	UNIN0001489	Email from Samanta Piano to Valdo Mendes Calocane, re: Meeting
9.	UNIN0001650	Screenshot of Microsoft Teams chat between Samanta Piano and Unknown User re: Meeting
10.	UNIN0000908	Email from Samanta Piano to Valdo Mendes Calocane, Stewart McWilliam and Emma Barney, re: Voluntary interruption of study
11.	UNIN0000772	Request to interrupt study taught programmes – UK campus of Valdo Calocane
12.	UNIN0000299	Email from Emma Barney to David Hann, Benjamin Rothwell, Chantal Cappelletti and others Re: Touching base and a request for information

13.	UNIN0001840	Module M3 Personal Tutors (UK) moodle Nottingham
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