

the
GOVERNING BODY

**MINUTES of the Governing Body Business Meeting held on Tuesday,
15 April 2025 in room 134, Pembroke Building, Medway Campus, Central Avenue,
Chatham Maritime, Chatham ME4 4TB and via Microsoft Teams, held at 15.00**

Present:	Mr C McWilliam (Chair)	Ms T King
	Mr A Chowdhury	Mr R Patel
	Professor J Harrington (Vice-Chancellor & CEO)	Ms J Seehra-Pearce
	Mr R Hicks	Mrs E Sideris
	Ms B Hill CBE	Dr S Sweeney (via Teams)

In attendance:

Mrs T Brighton (Governance Support Manager)(minutes)
 Ms K Brough (Associate Director of Student Registry, SAS)(item 24/45)
 Ms K Dawson (CEO, Greenwich Students' Union)(item 24/44)(via Teams)
 Mr C Forster (Executive Director of Estates & Facilities)(item 24/43)
 Mr P Garrod (University Secretary)
 Professor V Lemm (Deputy Vice-Chancellor & Provost)
 Dr Simon Lewis (Executive Director of Strategic Planning)(item 24/46)
 Mr P Taylor (Chief Operating Officer)
 Ms L Watson (Chief Financial Officer)
 Professor A Westby (Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research & Knowledge Exchange))

Apologies for Absence:

Ms P Coles, Mr M Orr, Mr S Saluja, Mr A Sharma

GB 24/38 ANNOUNCEMENTS AND DECLARATIONS OF CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The Chair reported that Mr Sushil Saluja would be stepping down as an Independent Governor at the end of the current academic year due to his other commitments. At the next meeting, the Governing Body would thank him formally for his contribution.

The Business Meeting would be followed by a brief private meeting of Independent Governors with the Vice-Chancellor.

There were no declarations of conflict of interests.

GB 24/39 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING AND ACTIONS (GB 24/P

The minutes of the meeting held on 25 February 2025 were approved. The actions tracker was received.

GB 24/40 VICE-CHANCELLOR'S REPORT (GB 24/P76)

The Governing Body received the regular report from the Vice-Chancellor on recent developments:

- [REDACTED]
- **Executive Director, Marketing and External Relations:** Following a competitive recruitment process, Claire Matthews had been appointed to the role of Executive Director, Marketing and External Relations wef 14 April 2025.
- **Student Success Update:** Governors received a copy of the Greenwich Curriculum Framework which, together with the revised Assessment and Feedback Policy, had recently been approved by Academic Council. These would ensure that the curricula best supported students. Planning for implementation of the Curriculum Framework from September 2025 continued and the business case for the Curriculum Shape project had been approved by the Finance Committee on 7 April.
- **Devonport House Project Planning Permission:** The Governing Body welcomed the news that the Devonport House project had successfully gone through the Royal Borough of Greenwich's planning permission stage without challenge.
- **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion:** The University Gender and Wider Pay Gap Report 2024 had recently been published and had included, for the first time, figures on disability, ethnicity and sexual orientation pay gaps. Preparations for a number of submissions, including the University Mental Health Charter, were in progress.
- **Office for Students (OfS) Decision:** The Governing Body was briefed on the recent decision of the OfS which had imposed a monetary penalty on the University of Sussex for breaching registration conditions E1 (Public Interest) and E2 (Management & Government). The University of Sussex was applying for judicial review in relation to the findings that it had failed to uphold free speech and academic freedom. A watching brief on events would be maintained.
- **Franchised Provision:** The Governing Body was assured that the University would not be affected by the recent Department for Education consultation on franchised provision. All of the University's UK franchise providers were either registered with the OfS or fell into the exempt categories.

The Governors thanked the executive and senior managers for an illuminating World Café session organised as part of the Strategy Day which had preceded the meeting.

GB 24/41

COMMITTEE CHAIR REPORTS

In accordance with the recommendation from the recent effectiveness report conducted by Halpin, the Committee chairs reported briefly on the most recent business of their committees:

Finance Committee (7 April 2025): The Committee Vice-Chair recounted the discussions held at the meeting. The Committee had approved the business case for the Curriculum Shape project with £3.3m in funding. Net efficiencies of £1.8m p.a. would result in the total project cost being covered in 2 years after full implementation.

[REDACTED] A KPMG report based on the financial statements of their HE clients had provided some interesting insights, including highlighting the comparative resilience of the University's position. The case for the extension of the Integrated Facilities Management contract for two further years had been

agreed (subject to approval by the Governing Body), noting that improvements to compliance would continue to be pursued.

Audit & Risk Committee (17 March 2025): In the absence of the Committee chair, the University Secretary reported that the Committee had reviewed internal audit reports on CMA and ASA Compliance and Safeguarding which had received positive assurance with some process improvements recommended for both. Partial assurance had been given to a third report on PSRB Compliance, which had identified inconsistencies relating to the decentralised controls structure. Approval had been given to the external audit plan for 2024/25 developed by Buzzacott and the updated Anti Money Laundering & Counter Terrorist Funding Policy.

The Governing Body noted the outcomes of the audits and asked about the specific risks underlying these areas of operation of which it ought to be aware. Assurance was provided that the Safeguarding audit recommendations had been around governance and reporting and that operationally there were no issues. PSRB compliance, however, was currently a higher risk area and a much clearer governance framework was now being put in place. Management had directed the internal auditors to the area and the outcome was in line with management's expectation. The Audit & Risk Committee would be following up implementation of the review's recommendations and tight timescales had been set for critical issues. The University was working to re-apply for its Initial Teaching Training accreditation and the audit had helped to promote greater confidence in the oversight of the preparation and process for this.

Academic Council (19 March 2025): The Vice-Chancellor reported that the Council had been pleased to receive confirmation that the new student payment instalment platform should be ready for implementation in 2025/26. It would make a real difference for international students and was an initiative which the GSU team had pushed for. There had been a robust discussion on the Curriculum Framework and the Assessment & Feedback Policy which were integral to the Curriculum Shape project. The Business School had provided an interesting update on its work to drive improvements in its Graduate Outcomes. A presentation on Research Power in advance of the next Research Excellence Framework had been given.

In response to a question about academic assurance and the inappropriate use of AI, the Governing Body was advised that there was a clear policy in place guiding students in its use. Detecting the use of AI was difficult and the new Assessment & Feedback Policy encouraged authentic assessments which alleviated the use of AI. As this could be a reputational issue, it was agreed that a report providing assurance on how students were being taught to use AI ethically and how assessments were being designed to prevent cheating through AI would be provided to a future meeting. The Vice-Chancellor agreed to circulate a HEPI booklet on the subject to Governors for information.

People & Governance Committee: The Chair reported that the Committee appreciated the new style reporting from the Executive Director of People on the People Enabling Strategy work and KPI performance. The report on the recent effectiveness review had been presented by Halpin Partnership. The University's governance had been found to be sector leading which the Committee agreed was a tremendous outcome. The search to appoint new Independent Governors being conducted by Anderson Quigley was proceeding well and final interviews were scheduled for 7 May 2025.



[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

GB 24/43 INTEGRATED FACILITIES MANAGEMENT (IFM) CONTRACT EXTENSION AND FUTURE STRATEGY UPDATE (GB 24/P78)

Christopher Forster, Executive Director of Estates & Facilities, attended for this item.

The Executive Director of Estates & Facilities reported that the University's Integrated Facilities Management (IFM) five-year contract provided by Sodexo was due to end in September 2025. The contract included an option to extend for an additional two years and in order to help decision making around whether to extend or not, three areas had been considered:

- A Review of Technical Compliance

Since the contract had been mobilised, there had been challenges with technical compliance and an external company had been auditing compliance annually. The recent audit indicated that some shortfalls in compliance remained, and Sodexo had been made aware that full compliance was a condition of the contract extension. In response, Sodexo had committed to addressing all non-compliant issues prior to signing any contract extension and proposed to implement a new computerised facilities management system to enable better compliance management.

- Opportunities to drive efficiency savings

As a result of negotiations with Sodexo in respect of cost savings and efficiencies predicated on a two-year extension of the contract, the report identified proposed net savings of £360k and investment of £468k, inclusive of VAT.

- Consideration of future delivery models beyond the end of any extension of the IFM contract with Sodexo.

As part of the future long-term strategic thinking for facilities management delivery, external consultants had been commissioned to appraise a range of high-level strategic options for the most appropriate future facilities management strategy. Three options had been identified and between now and September a fuller evaluation of these options would be conducted with a view to preparing a business case with a recommendation of the preferred future delivery model for presentation to VCE in September 2025.

The Governing Body thanked the Executive Director of Estates & Facilities for the comprehensive report and, on the recommendation of the Finance Committee:

- **approved** the extension of the IFM contract by two years until September 2027;
- **approved** the net savings negotiated with Sodexo subject to agreement of the contract extension.

GB 24/44 STUDENTS' UNION REPORT (GB 24/P80)

Kate Dawson, Chief Executive Officer, Greenwich Students' Union (GSU), attended for this item.

The CEO presented an update on the GSU's recent activities to enhance the student experience and highlighted the following matters:

- The team of student academic representatives had been providing feedback mapped across National Student Survey (NSS) categories in order to help identify areas of good practice and those where improvement was needed. The full reports had been made available to Faculties, which included programme and School level data and qualitative feedback to enhance the quality of interventions.
- Following a successful election, the new officer team for 2025/26 had been elected. 17% of the student population had voted and a democracy review was under way to improve representation and ensure the GSU was meeting the needs of the student body.
- The Retention Project had been rebranded as the 'Check-In Service' to improve visibility and recognition. The objective of reaching students who were vulnerable to withdrawal remained unchanged and 3389 calls this academic session had been made. GSU was working with Faculties to address concerns with targeted interventions.

The Governing Body noted that concern around the mental health impact of financial pressures was a prominent issue raised by students. In partnership with the University, the GSU was providing a number of cost-of-living initiatives to respond to ongoing financial difficulties. The new student instalment payment plan would also help in this regard.

The Governing Body expressed disappointment at the gender imbalance in the new Officer team and was advised that improving future representation was a key objective of the GSU reform and democracy review. There was an opportunity to address the issue with the programme and society representatives, but it was recognised that some exposure existed.

The GSU Chief Executive Officer left the meeting.



GB 24/45 ANNUAL REPORT ON STUDENT CASEWORK 2023/24 (GB 23/P79)

Karen Brough, Associate Director of Student Registry, attended for this item.

The Governing Body considered the annual report and presentation on student casework for the 2023/24 academic year. These had been submitted to provide the Governing Body with assurance that the University's handling of student casework was continuing to meet the expectations set by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education. The report, which had been considered by the Academic Council, summarised key data, trends and key achievements for 2023/24 and also outlined the priorities and future developments to continuously improve the efficiency of casework, consistency of outcome and mitigation of risks to the University.

The Associate Director of Student Registry drew attention to the overall reduction of 15% in the total number of cases, where the number of Completion of Procedures letters to close casework had fallen from 395 in 2023 to 213 in 2024. This was believed to be connected to the positive work undertaken to improve student understanding of academic appeals, revisions to regulations, greater clarity in outcomes and more consistent application of regulations and procedures. The OIA had reviewed 59 of Greenwich's cases in 2024, the same number of complaints as in 2023. Of these, one had been assessed as Partly Justified and the other as Justified. In response, the University had revised its record keeping procedures at Progression and Award Boards (PABs) and updated its annual training of PAB Chairs around exceptional decisions.

The Governing Body noted the significant increase in the number of disclosures of harassment and sexual misconduct via the Report + Support platform in 2023/24. This had been expected with the additional visibility and publicity for the platform following its formal launch in May 2023, and growth in disclosures had been planned for by putting in a team to support them. 2023/24 was also the platform's first full year of operation so was not directly comparable to the previous year. The Governing Body was briefed on the two separate reporting lines for disclosures and complaints and the ways in which they were resolved. The University Secretary agreed to circulate a copy of the detailed Report + Support annual report to Governors for information.

The Governing Body agreed that the Report + Support platform was a positive step forward in enabling a culture of reporting and providing useful intelligence on patterns and trends of issues. The Student Lifecycle Management system sat in parallel with the platform and data from both sources was used to identify interventions to support staff and students. The Governing Body agreed that the annual report had provided an interesting and informative read.

GB 24/46 STRATEGIC KPIs (GB 24/P81)

Dr Simon Lewis, Executive Director of Strategic Planning, attended for this item.

The Governing Body received an update on the performance of four of the nine Strategic Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). There had been a further improvement in KPI#5 (Gender Pay Gap) but a slight worsening of performance for KPI#6 (Staff Engagement) and KPI# 7 (Research and Knowledge Exchange Income as a percentage of overall income). KPI# 8 (Research Power) was considered to be on track to meet the 2030 target.

In relation to KPI#7 (Research and Knowledge Exchange Income), the Executive Director of Strategic Planning reported that changes to the definition, methodology and associated targets for this KPI were being proposed. The KPI would no longer be research and knowledge exchange income as a percentage of overall University income and instead would be measured in absolute terms and given a specific income target.

It was now being proposed that the target for 2029/30 should be a total of Research & Knowledge Exchange revenue of £35 million. This would represent 20% growth in the period 2024/25 to 2029/30. Bearing in mind the current external environment, this would still be regarded as a stretch target.

The Governing Body recognised that the new target was challenging but **approved** the change to the Research and Knowledge Exchange Income KPI#7 definition and associated targets.

GB 24/47 STRATEGIC RISKS (GB 23/P82)

The Governing Body received the quarterly report on Strategic Risks and the updated Strategic Risk Dashboard dated April 2025. The commentaries had been refreshed and the controls and actions updated to reflect recent developments. New actions had been added to strengthen controls around SRR1 (*Reputation*), SRR3 (*Financial Sustainability*), SRR8 (*Research & Knowledge Exchange*) and SRR10 (*IT Security*).

The Vice-Chancellor's Executive (VCE) had reviewed the four risks currently above their risk appetite threshold, SRR2 (*Student Recruitment*), SRR10 (*Information Security*), SRR 11 (*Safety*) and SRR13 (*UKVI*) and had decided, taking into consideration relevant external factors, not to reduce their risk scoring.

GB 24/48 GOVERNING BODY COMMITTEES: MATTERS REQUIRING APPROVAL (GB 23/P83)

The Governing Body **approved** the following:

- From the Audit & Risk Committee held on 17 March 2025:
 - Revised Risk Management Policy and Risk Management Guide for immediate implementation.
- From the People & Governance Committee (post 4 February 2025 meeting via circulation);
 - The appointment of Richard Hicks as the Chair of the Honorary Degrees Committee and the appointment of Craig McWilliam (Chair of the Governing Body) as Vice-Chair with immediate effect.
 - Revised Terms of Reference for the Finance Committee and the Honorary Degrees Committee (amended to reflect the above appointments and the addition of the Chair of the Governing Body to membership of the Finance Committee and other minor updates) for immediate implementation.

The meeting finished at 16:45.

T.A.Brighton / 29 April 2025