



Minutes of the Meeting of the Trustee Board

Date: 7 July 2025

Meeting time: 14.00pm– 17.00pm

Location: Greenhouse, Devonshire House

Membership:

Alex Martin (AM) – President and Chair

Katy Willis – External Trustee and Deputy

Kira Brookes (KB) – Officer Trustee/ Student Living Officer and Vice Chair

Ella Trudgeon (ET) – Student Trustee

Margaret Laithwaite (ML) – External Trustee

Reuben Sek (RS) – Student Trustee (joining Online)

Agneta Ravindran Buvana (ARB) – Student Trustee

Charles Jones (CJ) – External Trustee

India Walton-Salmon (IWS) – Officer Trustee / Societies and Employability Officer

Thomas Tran – Officer Trustee/ Communities and Equality Officer

Sebastian Racisz – Officer Trustee / Education Officer

Edward O'Sullivan – Student Trustee

Fanar Al-Derzi – Student Trustee

Sophie Elliott – External Trustee

Harriet Jones (HJ) – External Trustee

Sebastian Racisz – Officer Trustee / Education Officer

Kira Brookes (KB) – Officer Trustee/ Student Living Officer and Vice Chair of the Board

Apologies:

None

Absent:

Fanar Al-Derzi (FAD) – Student Trustee

Agneta Ravindran Buvana (ARB) – Student Trustee

In Attendance:

Ali Chambers (AC) – CEO and Board Secretary

Tom Barrass (TB) – Head of Student Engagement

Cassie Thornton (CT) – Head of Marketing and Brand

Lizzie Bowtell (LB) – Head of Organisational Development

Cindy Porter (CP) – Head of Finance

Amy Holden (AH) – Insights and Influence Senior Manager

Dani Alexander (DA) – Leadership and Governance Manager, Board Clerk / Minute taker

Rose Ahrin – Incoming Communities and Equality Officer

Francis Steptoe – Incoming new Education Officer

Gemma Veal – Incoming Societies and Employability Officer

Mia Alexander – Incoming Student Trustee

Dhruv Chadda – Incoming Student Trustee

Marco Agolzer – Incoming Student Trustee

Cordelia Thompson – Incoming Student Trustee
Laura Pike – Representation Review Consultant

MEETING MINUTES

1. Welcome to Trustees

The Chair (AM) welcomed both returning and new trustees, acknowledging the busy agenda and the need to make decisions. They emphasised the importance of avoiding jargon for the benefit of new members.

2. Apologies for absence

No apologies were received for this meeting. It was noted that FAD and ARB were not present in the meeting.

3. Notification of Any Other Business

There were no new notifications of any other business.

4. Notification of Any new Conflicts of Interest

No new conflicts of interest.

5. Notification or Any Conflicts for this meeting

No new conflicts of interest for the meeting.

6. Minutes from the last meeting and action log

The minutes of the previous meeting were reviewed and approved as an accurate record by the Board. All action in the Action log were complete and could be removed from the log.

7. Student Engagement Report

To Note TB-24.52

AM presented the Student Engagement Report, focusing on the University's ongoing Curriculum for Change Project. The project aims to reform the curriculum in response to evolving student needs and financial pressures.

Key points discussed included:

- Curriculum for Reform:

The University is undertaking major curriculum changes to improve alignment with student expectations and institutional sustainability. A key focus is increasing the emphasis on skills development and employability within academic programmes.

- Introduction of American-style Minors:

The Board was informed about the plan to introduce American-style minors. These would allow students to study a minor subject alongside their main

degree, replacing elements of the current modularity system with a more structured and accredited framework.

- Changes to the Academic Year:
AS outlined proposed changes to the academic calendar. This includes introducing teaching during term three and spreading assessments more evenly across the year, rather than concentrating them in the final term.
- Student Feedback and Influence:
The Board noted the role of student feedback in shaping the reforms. In particular, a proposal for a mandatory immersive module in the first year was removed following negative feedback from students.

The Board welcomed the update and noted the importance of continued student involvement in shaping the curriculum changes.

Trustees raised a concern about how to keep important projects going, especially those led by individual officers. AM and TB agreed and talked about the need to make sure key projects are built into the Guild and University systems so they don't stop when officer terms end.

Trustees also highlighted the importance of the Guild's lobbying and advocacy work. They highlighted issues like the use of NHS language and class inequalities, stressing that collective action is needed. They agreed that the Guild should continue to challenge unfair government policies and push for positive change.

The Board agreed that making projects sustainable and using the Guild's voice to stand up for students are both key priorities.

Trustees suggested updating the format of the Student Engagement Report for future meetings. The new format could include a clear narrative structure covering:

- o Topic
- o Why it matters
- o Who is involved
- o What's happening
- o Impact on students

The aim is to make the report more focused, engaging, and easier to understand. The Board agreed to trial this structure in future reports.

ACTION: Update the format of the Student Engagement Report for future meetings to include: Topic, Why it matters, Who is involved, What's happening, and Impact.

The Board noted the update.
LB left the meeting.

8. CEO Report – Impact Report	To Note	TB-24.53
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AC shared a video on the impact of this year's work, noting positive progress and outcomes.

The Board noted the key data and insights and expressed satisfaction with the figures presented, particularly in relation to pilot initiatives linked to the Representation Review.

University stakeholder updates

AC also updated the Board on key university stakeholders:

- Lisa Roberts is currently serving as Vice President of Universities UK (UUK).
- Tim Quine, Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Education and Student Experience, remains an important contact for the Guild, but will be stepping down and will be replaced by Liz Jones.
- Liz Jones will be stepping into a key stakeholder role, which will be critical for continued partnership work between the University and the Guild.

Universities financial position

- AC gave an update on the university's current financial challenges, including lower-than-expected international student recruitment and the resulting need for major cost savings.
- The discussion also covered how these financial pressures may affect the student experience, and what steps the university is taking to manage the situation and protect key services.

The Board noted the update and recognised the importance of continuing to monitor the impact on students.

Strategic Opportunities for the Guild

A potential opportunity was noted for the Guild to deliver some university services. The Board noted this as a positive opportunity for both increased impact and partnership working.



A question was raised regarding the NSS (National Student Survey) and how Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) will be impacted by changes in Guild activities or strategic direction.

Trustees discussed whether the representation KPI specifically will need to change, and how the Guild can continue to meaningfully measure its impact in this area. It was agreed that clarity is needed on what the main goal for representation work should be and how best to track progress against it going forward.

The Board agreed this should be considered as part of the wider strategy and impact framework development.

9. Stakeholder evaluation outcomes To Note TB 24.54
AH presented the latest stakeholder evaluation, noting a positive increase in engagement with academic staff.

The Board discussed the importance of aligning the Guild's priorities with those of the university to strengthen collaboration and shared impact.

A key point of discussion was the need to establish joint priorities between the Guild and the University—particularly in areas like education and the overall student experience.

The recent appointment of a new Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Education and Student Experience was also discussed. The Board agreed on the importance of building a strong relationship with this new stakeholder and ensuring their early engagement with the Guild's work.

The Board noted the update.

The meeting had a break from 15.05-15.10pm
LB rejoined the meeting.

10. Student Representation Review To Approve TB-24.55
Laura Pike joined the meeting to present the paper for approval of the Representation Review recommendations.

AM gave an update on the project so far. The trustees wanted to make sure students have a real say in how the new resources are used. They agreed it was important that students understand why these changes are happening and feel involved in the process.

The board received a presentation on the Representation Review recommendations and an update on progress. Trustees discussed how the new model will ensure students are meaningfully involved, and how it can be flexible, inclusive, and accessible to a wide range of students.

Key themes included board and staff structures, officer roles, and how to support the new approach. It was agreed that clear communication with students will be essential throughout the process.

Main Points Discussed:

- How the board makeup and trustee meetings might need to change to support this new model.
- What staff roles are needed to support this model and how the team will be organised.
- It was highlighted that this is not about saving money but about reaching more students and creating more opportunities for representation.
- Communication will focus on showing students that their feedback has been heard and that the new roles will be accessible and flexible.

The trustees asked for a clear communications plan to explain these changes to students. They agreed this plan would be shared at the next trustee meeting.

Board Vote: Trustees voted in favour of the new model. This vote was quorate.

Alex reminded everyone that this decision is confidential and should be treated carefully. Trustees agreed it's really important to keep students informed throughout the process, so everyone feels involved and understands what's happening.

Approved: The new representation model was approved, and the board is committed to making sure communication and transparency are top priorities as the changes happen.

ACTION: Develop a clear communications plan to explain the changes to student representation and present the plan at the next trustee meeting.

ACTION: Ensure the organisational design incorporates findings and recommendations from the Representation Review.

ET left the meeting.

The meeting had a break from 16.05pm-16.20pm

11. Cost of living recommendations

To Approve TB-24.56

LB presented the paper outlining the rationale and recommendations for a 3% base pay uplift for Guild staff, effective from August 2025. The proposal also included a recommendation to conduct an in-year review to consider a one-off cost-of-living payment in response to ongoing economic pressures.

The paper reaffirmed the Guild's commitment to a values-based reward approach, ensuring fair and meaningful recognition for staff contributions in line with organisational principles.

The proposal had been reviewed and approved in advance by both the Finance and Risk Committee and the People and Governance Committee.

Decision: The board approved the 3% base pay uplift to take effect from August 2025.

An in-year review for a potential one-off cost-of-living payment was also supported in principle, subject to further review and financial planning.

Budget and annual plans To Approve TB-24.57
CP presented the budget and annual plans, highlighting a focus on increasing student engagement and shifting towards more student staff roles.

The board reviewed and approved the budget and plans, emphasising the importance of aligning resources with the organisation's strategic priorities.

CP, TB and LB gave verbal updates on the annual plans for the meeting.

Approved: The Board approved the budget and annual plans for 2025-2026

12. Guild Future Strategy & Organisational Design To Approve TB 24.58
AC and LB led a detailed discussion on the forthcoming organisational design process. They emphasised the importance of ensuring that the organisation's structure aligns effectively with its strategic goals and long-term vision.

They presented a high-level plan for reviewing existing structures, identifying areas for improvement, and proposing changes to enhance clarity, accountability, and effectiveness across teams. A central focus was placed on creating a structure that is not only efficient but also responsive to the evolving needs of students and staff.

AC and LB highlighted the need for open and inclusive engagement throughout the process. They confirmed that both staff and recognised unions would be

involved at every stage to ensure that any changes reflect on-the-ground realities, are well-informed, and widely supported.

The board welcomed the proposed approach and stressed the importance of balancing strategic alignment with organisational culture and operational resilience. Trustees noted that this work is essential in creating a fit-for-purpose organisation that can successfully deliver its priorities.

Actions: Head of Organisational Development to develop a detailed engagement plan to communicate the organisational design process to staff and gather their input on current pain points and opportunities.

Actions: The Finance and Risk Committee to create new financial Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) in line with the new financial strategy, to be developed alongside the wider organisational strategy.

13. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

The below items were not discussed, but were noted or approved during the meeting:

a. Finance and Risk Committee minutes	To Note	TB-24.60
b. People and Governance Committee minutes	To Note	TB-24.61
c. Student Trustee Recruitment timeline	To Note	TB-24.62
d. Guild Accountability Board meeting minutes	To Note	TB-24.63
e. Legislative and Regulatory updates The board approved the updates.	To Approve	TB-24.64
f. Governance dates for 2025-2026 The board approved the Governance dates for 2025-2026.	To Approve	TB-24.65
g. Organisational performance	To Note	TB-24.66
h. Wellbeing Strategy	To Note	TB-24.67

14. AOB

Honorary Lifetime Membership for Alex Martin

The board considered the proposal to award honorary lifetime membership to Alex Martin in recognition of their contributions during their time on the board. The proposal was presented for approval. Decision: The board approved the awarding of honorary lifetime membership to Alex Martin.

Alex expressed their thanks to the board, reflecting on their three years of service as a trustee.

The Chair (Alex) also took a moment to thank the outgoing student trustees—Reuben and Ella, who were present at the meeting—as well as Agneta and Fanar,

who were unable to attend. Their dedication and contributions during their terms were acknowledged with appreciation.

15. Feedback Form

Trustees were asked to complete the Board feedback form after the meeting.

16. Date of the Next Meeting – October 2025

17. End of meeting

ACTION LOG

Action	Date of action	Deadline	Responsible for action	Progress and Impact
Update the format of the Student Engagement Report for future meetings to include: Topic, Why it matters, Who is involved, What's happening, and Impact.	7 th July 2025	October 2025	Guild President (SR)	
Develop a clear communications plan to explain the changes to student representation and present the plan at the next trustee meeting.	7 th July 2025	October 2025	Head of Marketing and Brand (CT)	
Ensure the organisational design incorporates findings and recommendations from the Representation Review.	7 th July 2025	October 2025	Head of Organisational Development (LB)	
Head of Organisational Development to develop a detailed engagement plan to communicate the organisational design process to staff and gather their input on current pain points and opportunities.	7 th July 2025	October 2025	Head of Organisational Development (LB)	
The Finance and Risk Committee to create new financial Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) in line with the new financial strategy, to be developed alongside the wider organisational strategy.	7 th July 2025	Add to cycle of business for Finance and Risk November 2025	SLT	