



Minutes of the Meeting of the Trustee Board

Date: 16 October 2025

Time: 9.30am – 12.30pm

Location: The Greenhouse, Devonshire House, Streatham Campus, Exeter

Membership:

Sebastian Racisz – President and Chair of the Board
Katy Willis – External Trustee and Deputy Chair of the Board
Kira Brookes (KB) – Officer Trustee/ Student Living Officer and Vice Chair of the Board
Margaret Laithwaite (ML) – External Trustee
Charles Jones (CJ) – External Trustee
Sophie Elliott – External Trustee
Harriet Jones (HJ) – External Trustee
Rose Arhin – Communities and Equality Officer
Francis Steptoe – Education Officer
Edward O’Sullivan – Student Trustee
Gemma Veal – Societies and Employability Officer
Mia Alexander – Student Trustee
Dhruv Chadda – Student Trustee
Marco Agolzer – Student Trustee
Cordelia Thompson – Student Trustee

Apologies:

Charles Jones (CJ) – External Trustee
Harriet Jones (HJ) – External Trustee
Cindy Porter (CP) – Head of Finance

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
Amy Holden (AH) – Insights and Influence Senior Manager
Dani Alexander (DA) – Leadership and Governance Manager, Board Clerk / Minute taker
Dem Salsbury (DS) – Finance Manager

STANDING ITEMS

1. Chair's Welcome
The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed all Trustees. Everyone agreed that the away day held yesterday was excellent and productive.
2. Apologies for absence
Apologies were received from Charles Jones, Harriet Jones, and Cindy Porter.
3. Notification of Any Other Business
It was noted that Charles Jones has resigned as a Trustee. A recruitment timeline will be put together over the next few weeks for Trustees to review, with the aim of recruiting a new external Trustee. The Board thanked Charles for being an excellent Trustee and best of wishes in their new chapter in Paris.
4. Notification of Any New Conflicts of Interest
There were no notification of any new conflicts of interest.
5. Notification of Any Conflicts for this meeting
There was no notification of any new conflicts of interest for this meeting.
6. Board Terms of Reference and Delegation of Authority To Approve
The Board approved the terms of reference, and delegation of authority.
7. Minutes from the last meeting and action log To Note
The Board noted the minutes from the last meeting and action log.

BUSINESS ITEMS

8. Student Engagement Report To Note
Feedback on Paper Format: Trustees relayed feedback from HJ regarding the difficulty of reading long text-heavy papers and suggested making the documents more visual, such as using a scorecard structure to indicate progress on priorities.

The board discussed the potential trade-off between including a visual scorecard and maintaining detailed narrative content, agreeing that the four-page guideline for papers is flexible and that additional appendices could be used for detail.

The Board noted the papers.

9. CEO Report

To Approve

AC presented the paper and highlighted areas to the board for discussion and approval.

The Board discussed the paper and the asked which was approved.

10. Organisational performance

To Approve

CT presented outcomes from the welcome programme, highlighting increased student engagement, society participation, and survey results, and discussed ongoing improvements in data collection and reporting.

The board reviewed positive results from the welcome programme, including increased event attendance and society memberships, with tailored communications and streamlined events contributing to student satisfaction.

DS presented management accounts up until 31 August 2025. The Guild was showing a YTD surplus of £40,799. The expected surplus for Aug was £31,224, a positive variance of £9,575. This was due to phasing of new recruitment and unused contingency. DS noted the activities team continues to work with societies with both high and low balances, offering support and addressing historic debts.

LB presented the staff survey reflections, including the Guild receiving a 2 Star status for 'Outstanding to work for 2025'.

The Board requested more detailed data, including year-on-year comparisons, insights from the impact and representation reviews, and related statistics. Trustees also discussed developing improved dashboards and real-time reporting. There was further discussion about tracking unique interactions, with a focus on defining what counts as meaningful engagement and how to distinguish this from meaningful interactions.

11. Post Away Day - Strategy Ambition & Organisational Design / To Approve

AC and LB led a detailed discussion on organisational design.

AC highlighted the importance of improving capacity, noting that the organisation is close to achieving its strategic goals but limited operationally. The current situation poses a mission-critical risk if left unaddressed.

Board Recommendations and Decisions: APPROVED.

The Board requested continued updates, feedback opportunities, and further development of the organisational design proposals over the coming months.

ACTION: SLT to action strategy ambition and Organisational design proposal, and bring an update back to the December board.

12. BREAK 11.30am-11.35am

13. Representation Review update

To Note

TB presented the paper as read, and facilitated a session on the ongoing representation review, inviting board input on the future structure and composition of the board, with a focus on maintaining effective student representation and preparing recommendations for future governance.

TB would takeaway the notes from the session and work with DA to present options at the People and Governance meeting on the 13th of November 2025.

The Board noted the update.

14. Community cohesion

To Note

TB-25.08

TB presented the paper as read. TB addressed ongoing work related to community cohesion, specifically the adoption and communication of an Islamophobia definition, and committed to providing an update on this.

ACTION: TB to provide an update on the adoption and communication of the Islamophobia definition at the next Board meeting.

15. Impact KPIS

To Approve

CT updated the board on progress with impact KPIs and dashboard tools, seeking approval to continue development and incorporating feedback from the Trustee board away day on clarity, accessibility, and actionable data presentation.

The Board emphasised that any materials presented should include enough detail and clearly show what is being reviewed. Trustees also stressed the importance of ensuring that the methodology behind the data is trustworthy.

ACTION: CT to update absent Trustees on the dashboard and KPI development.

The Board approved the new Impact KPI approach

16. Student Members' Meeting engagement plan

To Approve

DA outlined plans for the upcoming student members meeting, including efforts to improve accessibility for online students, budget considerations, and making the event more engaging and informative for attendees.

Plans include live streaming the AGM for online students, clarifying voting procedures, and enhancing the clarity of meeting materials to support students unfamiliar with what the Guild AGM involves, and what the Guild does.

The board reviewed the event budget, with most funds allocated to catering and technical support, and discussed strategies to increase student engagement during the meeting.

Action: DA to implement plans for the AGM, including live streaming for online students, clarifying voting procedures, and improving the clarity of meeting materials for students unfamiliar with the Guild and the AGM process.

The Board approved the plan.

17. Complaints Annual Report To Approve

DA presented the annual complaints report, highlighting recommendations for strengthening informal mediation, clarifying complaint types, and ensuring accessibility and support for students throughout the process.

The board agreed on the importance of informal mediation for committee disputes, maintaining formal processes for serious or service complaints, and providing clear guidance on the Guild website.

The complaints procedure would come back to a future board for review and approval.

APPROVED: The Board approved the paper.

18. Any other business

The Chair announced CJ's intention to resign from the board, initiating plans for external trustee recruitment. DA would be in touch with Trustees on next steps. The board thanked Charles for this amazing work and wished him the best of luck with the move to Paris.

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

19. Board Schedule of Business To Approve

The Board approved the schedule of business for 2025-2026

20. Board and committee dates for 2025-2026 To Note

21. Committee membership To Approve

The Board approved the Committee membership

22. Companies House & Charity Commission Notification To Note

23. Register of interests To Note

24. CEO Performance Management Conversation summary To Note

Guild staff left the meeting (AC, CT, TB, LB, DA)

25. Date of the next meeting 1st December 2025 with the Student Members' Meeting to follow this meeting.
26. The Chair closed the meeting and thanked trustees for their time

ACTION LOG

Action	Date of action	Deadline	Responsible for action	Progress and Impact
TB to provide an update on the adoption and communication of the Islamophobia definition at the next Board meeting.	16 th October 2025	1 st December 2025	Tom Barrass	
Update absent Trustees on the dashboard and KPI development.	16 th October 2025	1 st December 2025	Cassie Thornton and Amy Holden	
SLT to action strategy ambition and Organisational design proposal, and bring an update back to the December board.	16 th October 2025	1 st December 2025	SLT	
DA to implement plans for the AGM, including live streaming for online students, clarifying voting procedures, and improving the clarity of meeting materials for students unfamiliar with the Guild and the AGM process.	16 th October 2025	1 st December 2025	Dani Alexander	Online option made available at AGM

