Minutes of the Meeting of the Trustee Board

Date: 4th December 2023

Time: 14.00pm – 17.00pm

Location: The Greenhouse, Devonshire House

Membership:

Rhys Wallis (RW) – Societies and Employability Officer / Officer Trustee **Interim Chair of the Trustee Board**
Alex Martin (AM) – Student Trustee
Alex Stanley (AS) – Education Officer / Officer Trustee
David Craddock (DC) – External Trustee
Ella Trudgeon (ET) – Student Trustee
Harriet Jones (HJ) – External Trustee
Margaret Laithwaite (ML) – External Trustee
Natalie Stewart (NS) – External Trustee
Nur Farah Meor Azlan (FMA) – Student Trustee
Pip Shaw (PS) – Student Living Officer / Officer Trustee
Reuben Sek (RS) – Student Trustee

Apologies:

Emma de Saram (EdS) – President / Officer Trustee and **Chair of the Trustee Board**
Mia Robillard-Day (MRD) – Communities and Equality Officer / Officer Trustee
Julie Walkling (JW) – External Trustee and **Deputy Chair of the Trustee Board**
Agneta Ravindran Buvana (ARB) – Student Trustee

In Attendance:

Ali Chambers (AC) – CEO and Board Secretary
Cassie Thornton (CT) – Head of Marketing and Brand
Tom Barrass (TB) – Head of Student Engagement
Tony Reissner (TR) – Interim Head of Finance (online)
Eleanor Walker (EW) – Head of Organisational Development
Dani Alexander (DA) – Senior Coordinator for Leadership and Governance and Board Clerk / Minute taker
Emily Jameson (EJ) – Campus Engagement Manager
Amy Holden (AH) – Insights Manager
Dem Salsbury (DS) – Finance Manager

MEETING MINUTES

1. **Welcome to all continuing and new trustees**
2. **Apologies for absence**
    i. Apologies received for Emma de Saram (EdS) and Mia Robillard-Day (MRD), Julie Walkling (JW), Agneta Ravindran Buvana (AR)
3. **Notification of Any Other Business**
    i. The SU / Cornwall Update
4. **Notification of Any New Conflicts of Interest**
5. **Notification of Any Conflicts for this meeting**
6. **Offline decision log**

    Board to note this paper

7. **Minutes from the last meeting and action log**

    ACTION: Minutes log – JW noted as co-chair – amendment needed to update to Deputy Chair

8. **Terms of Reference**

    The Board approved the Terms of Reference

BUSINESS ITEMS

9. **Strategy and Student Priorities**

    AH joined the meeting at 14.06pm to present TB-23.04. AH introduced herself to the Board.

    AC presented to Board the Guild Strategy and Student Priorities and explained how students set these priorities through a structured framework at least twice per year. AC presented a snapshot on the current priorities which are steered by the student voice coming from various channels including advisory boards, department and academic reps, and student feedback such as survey superheroes.

    AH presented the 6 Student Priorities for 2023-2024 which were Job Prospects, Living Costs, Campaigns, Initiatives and Activism, EDI, events and activities, and Health and Wellbeing. These areas were identified through a student feedback survey, and following the survey the insights team organised workshops for students to feedback on these areas as to how the Guild can achieve these priorities and impact students positively. The Officers and Guild team would now focus on these 6 key areas this year in a collaborative way including working with the Student Experience Partnership Board where the Officers and SLT meet University Stakeholders. These priorities replaced Officer manifestos in the democracy review. AC talked the Board through on how Student Priorities feeds in to and gives direction for how to achieve the 5 Year Plan and Guild Strategy.

AH presented on Guild Life Participation, a new scheme for 2023-2024 and AH presented on what this is, how this data is gathered, and how this would feed into what we do for 2023-2024 and onwards. The Guild Life Participation monitors the number of students that participate in any aspect of Guild life including a total number of unique individuals who have engaged, a demographic breakdown of the individuals who have engaged, and how they have engaged. So far for 2023-2024, 36% of students had engaged with the Guild and 12,376 individuals and 34,452 total interactions.

AH noted how we track engagement and presented on the Guilds KPIs, and reported back against how we are doing. AH updated the board on how we gather feedback on KPIs via 500 student Survey Superheroes who have and will complete he survey monthly. The KPIs presented related to the Guild brand and communications, the Guilds digital platforms, and the Guild spaces and whether the Guild spaces reflects students' needs.

Trustees noted that feedback was needed to be brought back to Board on how the Guild progress vs KPIs and student priority areas. Trustees sought clarification on how the Priorities are sought from Students.

Trustees asked how stakeholder KPIs are measured, and this was confirmed as being measured by an annual stakeholder survey. Trustees felt the influence on and relationship with stakeholders including the University was key, but we could be doing better with this in measuring impact.

ACTION: For information paper on the progress of the Partnerships annual plan to be brought to board once the stakeholder survey has been completed as an update on stakeholder KPIs.

Trustees questioned the Officer KPI and how the gap between the current measure and the KPI will be reached. The Student Representation Review and review group will look at how students are represented, whether the current model is the best model, and how the Guild best supports the current role.

Trustees fed back positively for the Guild Life Participation and asked how the engagement is captured, and how meaningful the engagements are. AH fed back on this and highlighted how the Insights Team would like to create a pyramid of engagement to monitor levels of engagements with the Guild.

Trustees requested more information on how the Guild Advisory Board will hold Officers to account with student priorities. PS fed back how the Guild Advisory Board held the Officers to account including accountability sessions, and also how this extends into communications to students. Officers felt feedback could be recorded better for Guild Advisory Boards to feed back to the Officers and wider Guild teams.

Trustees asked for assurance on how the Guild Participation and Student Priorities data is reported vs demographics, and how the data can be used to increase participation and inclusion for minority groups. AH fed as to how the student priorities

are being used to break down data on demographics such as postgraduate students, widening participation students and how to use this data to improve their student experience. Advisory Boards are also used to focus more on EDI student engagement and International student engagement.

ACTION Student priorities report to come to a future Trustee Board to update the board on progress

Trustees asked for clarification on the KPI reporting on 'how students feel empowered to make change' and how this is measured. TB fed back on how we ask Students about social impact measures, and also ask for context on feedback and scoring.

AH left the meeting.

Board noted the paper.

10. CEO Report

AC presented the paper as read. AC updated the Board on the recent Senior Leadership Team visit to the NUS Strategy Exchange conference in Birmingham from 28-30th November 2023.

EW updated the Board on the award for Innovative Approach to Collaboration won by the Guild at the NUS Strategy Exchange conference 2023.

SLT presented to the Board on the key takeaways including regional partnerships and collaborating with other local SU's in the South West more, innovative approaches to People and processes, and innovative data gathering which the Guild is already doing. The Guild will

Trustees sought clarification as to why another Officer did not appraise the CE. AC fed back on this point around the time restrictions and capacity of Guild Officers. The Board gives delegated authority to the Chair and Deputy Chair to appraise the CE, therefore Trustees felt gathering feedback from the Board before the CE appraisal would be necessary for future appraisals.

ACTION: Chair and Deputy Chair to gather feedback prior to CE appraisals

Trustees recognised the difficult circumstances in term 1 around the loss of a staff member.

The Board noted the paper.

11. Student Experience Report

PS presented the paper as read. PS shared with the board the remit of the Student Living Officer, and how vital this Officer role is for the Guild and representing students in many issues around rent, cost of living. PS is seeking more routes to make change, and work with the University to make change. PS had also been

working on safety, sustainability and engagement with the community and looking at engagement area for students in this area.

AS presented on the areas the Education officer had focussed on including Industrial Action, and communications around Industrial Action. AS also fed back on the compensation scheme following the marketing and assessment boycott, and AS fed back to the University on issues faced by students around the compensation scheme. The pastoral mentor scheme and curriculum for change was another focus as mentioned in more detail in the Student Experience report. AS planned to represent the Guild at the RGSU residential in Manchester in December 2023, as well as a meeting with the shadow secretary of state Wes Streeting.

RW presented on the areas within his remit including how best to support students, student groups and committees when issues come up. Events and Activities were voted as a key priority for students therefore there is focus in this area for students and student groups. RW had also been sitting on the Graduation outcomes education gain task and finish group designed to report to the Teaching and Excellence framework around employability. More information can be found in the report.

Trustees noted the challenge around having a reduced capacity within the team and praised the Officer team for the work done so far.

Trustees noted the International student support and the huge issues International students face. Officers agreed they would continue to lobby the University and work towards a solution for International students.

Trustees asked for clarification on the Industrial Action scheme, and the issues faced by students. Officers fed back on the issues to the University.

Trustees also asked about the self-service mitigation and Officers assured the Trustees that the Guild are lobbying the University on this issue.

Trustees felt that commercial capability and venture events would benefit the Guild and it's members from an employability point of view.

The Board noted the paper.

12. International Student Engagement Snapshot

TB presented the paper as read. TB prompted the board for feedback on this paper and directed the Trustees to the prompt questions.

Trustees asked whether the Guild could focus on the breaking down the language barrier for many International students, and what else could be done on this including on the Guild website. Trustees were assured by the engagement of International Students trustees.

Trustees asked how the Guild is focussing on postgraduate students. TB fed back on how the Guild is focussing on International Students in a meaningful way this year, and agreed there is work to be done on PGR and PGT students.

Trustees asked how geo-political events are being managed, and impacts on students for marginalised. AC fed back on how events organised by Guild student groups are being managed in partnership with the Guild, and with a focus of safety. AC highlighted the challenge with working with events organised by non-student groups.

Trustees highlighted the risks around looking at International students as a homogeneous group regarding their experiences and backgrounds. TB reassured Trustees that research project data was being looked at to focus on international students individually and not focus on these students as a whole.

Trustees asked how the Guild is focussing on international students from different backgrounds and have different cultural beliefs to home students, and how these factors are feeding into student priorities and projects.

ACTION: International student journey and readiness before joining University to be looked in to by Guild Student Engagement and Communications teams on how to best support these students, and to feedback to the Board in April Trustee Board.

13. Academic Representation Update

TB presented the paper to the board and how Academic representation was an area of strategic risk, therefore the Board were given reassurance from this paper around academic representation. TB highlighted rep numbers and training have increased, and the academic representation team despite huge challenges are making good progress. Stakeholder managements was recognised as still needing more work in areas.

AS highlighted that he and Connie from the SU were chairing the Academic Rep Review group alongside the University, and how the group secured £5k for focus groups and to hire an external facilitator to focus on this project. AS informed the board he would be attending the Wonkhe trip to Latvia, Estonia and Finland in January 2024. AS emphasised the great work reps are doing.

Trustees highlighted the error in the Terms of Reference supplied by the University. AS to feed back on this.

The Board noted the paper.

14. Welcome Report

EJ joined the meeting at 3.40pm. EJ presented the paper as read and asked for comments or feedback on the focus areas for Welcome 2024. Welcome week saw

more engagement from students on the whole and more society membership sign ups.

Trustees asked for clarity on whether there will be a January Welcome. EJ confirmed there will be a Welcome Back week for students in January 2024.

Trustees asked how the Guild welcomes Postgraduate students when they start at different times throughout the academic year. CT fed back on how more work is needed to focus on Postgraduate students and how the Guild welcomes these students.

Trustees asked for feedback on the commercial aspect. EJ fed back on how the Campus Engagement team wants to work more with Event Exeter on bringing commercial onto campus. TB fed back on how the Guild worked with the AU throughout the process of Welcome, including gathering and presenting on feedback on the Welcome week.

The Board noted the paper. EJ left the meting at 3.50pm.

15. Officer Role Review Update and Review Group Terms of Reference

TB presented the paper to the Board as read. TB explained how this review group is following an action from a CGR Committee and this paper outlined the terms of reference for moving forward this project. CGR key take aways were to ensure the review is student led, and data will be sought for the group to analyse. The review group would also be forward thinking and focussing on changing demographics within the student population. Stakeholder management was also a focus of the review group to ensure the expectation of the University is clear.

TB asked the board for comment and feedback, and to approve the terms of reference.

Trustees asked for clarification who would approve an external facilitator, and it was confirmed this would be decided by the review group. Trustees asked for assurance from this review group to have a membership can be representative of all Students. TB assured that diverse representation is a key focus.

Trustees asked for comment on why not all Officers were on the membership. TB assured the Board that views of all Officers, as well as External Trustees will be fed into the group via other channel including interview feedback, or consultations.

Trustees asked for the review to cover both national and international feedback on models of student representation.

Trustees asked for assurance that the group would take the legal side of the review in to consideration and review all options for how student representation will fit in with SU Charity sector law.

The provision first date of the review group meeting was set as January 2024. A deadline for the Review would be set as December 2024 for the review group to feed back to Board and for the review to be finished, with recommendations to be sent to the Board for July 2024 for feedback. Future updated will go to the February and April Boards as well.

Trustees approved Terms of Reference.

16. **Trustees took a break from 16.05pm – 16.10pm**
17. **Trustees' annual report and audited financial statements for the year ended 31 July 2023 (Griffin to present)**

TR and DS joined the meeting to present the audited accounts. Griffin Chartered Accountants presented the audited accounts to the Finance and Audit committee on the 16th November 2023 who recommended them to Trustee Board. TR focussed on areas of the audit including the Statement of Funds (p45).

The previous forecast outturn presented in May was £21.5k, actual unrestricted surplus for the year was £17.9k, restricted funds showed a deficit of (£54k). A total deficit of (£36.5k) TR took the Committee through the Year End Audit Adjustments.

TR asked the Board for any comment or concerns around the report to be highlighted in the meeting. No comments or concerns raised.

Trustees praised the Finance team on the clean audit for 2022-2023.

The Board approved - University of Exeter Students' Guild 2022/23 – Final Accounts

The Board approved Letter of Representation

The Board approved Management letter

18. **SUSS Pension Project Update**

AC presented the paper to the board as read. AC updated the board on progress including how the pay up and walk revaluation hasn't yet come back, but this would be shortly and any communications would be fed back to board. University Council will approve the fixed sum at the 12th December 2023 Council meeting.

AC asked the Trustee board for what assurances or updates they would like to be brought to Board.

The Board noted the paper.

19. **Management Accounts**

TR presented the Management Accounts as read. TR asked for comments or questions from the Board.

Trustees asked for clarification of the EDI and Misc fund and what these used to be. DS updated Trustees on these funds and how the Bracton Law fund related to EDI fund, and Misc society fund was the Dorman Society Fund.

Trustees asked for clarification on what happens should we have a surplus, and ML confirmed any surplus at the end of the year would go in to reserves. AC assured the board that the reforecast process recommits actual savings on projects in year to benefit the Guild in year.

Trustees sought clarification on the larger negative balances. DS confirmed these are Fixr delays, as well as societies waiting on ticket sales to come through from previous events. Acitivties work closely with societies who have any form of deficit and check in regularly.

20. FAC Update

ML updated the Board on the 5 year financial forecast, and explained how a more in depth 5 year annual plan will be presented to a future Finance and Audit committee. AC reassured the Board that the Finance team plan to focus on the 5 year plan in Term 2 of the 2023-2024 academic year.

ML presented some key updates from the Finance and Audit committee including approving a new Guild van.

ACTION: More in depth 5-year annual plan to be brought to the Finance and Audit committee February 2024.

Minutes from the last FAC meeting approved.

21. CGR Update

AC updated the Board on the last CGR meeting on 9th November 2023 in JW's absence. Areas the Committee focussed on included the risk register and mitigations around top 3 risks, discussed the process for appointing an interim Chair of the Trustee board, Trustees were updated on social media guidance, and the Governance Group terms of reference were approved at the Committee.

AC asked for all Trustees to familiarise themselves with the new Social Media guidance for Trustees.

Approved - CGR minutes
Approved - Board Behaviours Framework

22. Governance

RW presented the paper as read. The Board were assured they would be updated on the Governance Working Group progress at the next Trustee Board meeting.

The Board approved the Governance Action Plan

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

23. Schedule of Business
24. Register of Interests
25. Committee meetings and membership
26. Delegation of Authority
27. Terms of Reference for CGR
28. Terms of Reference – FAC
29. Companies House & Charity Commission Notification

    ACTION: Contact the Charity Commission to check the process around other trusteeships.

30. Complaints Annual Report

    Trustees asked for comment on whether the risk register reflected complaints made that pose a risk.

31. Safeguarding Report
32. Reforecast timeline
33. Governance Working Group minutes 17.11.23
34. Governance Working Group minutes 21.11.23

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

35. Any Other Business

    The SU Cornwall Campus update
    AC updated the Board on recent developments with the partnership with The SU on our Cornwall campus.

36. Feedback Form
37. Date of the Next Meeting – 26th February 2024
38. End of meeting
    Note of thanks to Natalie Stewart (External Trustee).
39. Optional Trustees board effectiveness check-in (15 minutes) – Guild Staff to leave the room

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ACTION LOG

Action	Date of action	Deadline	Responsible for action
update to board around the direction of travel and top level strategic plan for how the organisation will embed sustainability	13/2/23	July 2024	SLT
Create top level principles around EDI for the new building within the Estates Strategy	12/04/23	2023/2024	In progress

Survey stakeholder and partnerships plan to come to Board	04/12/23	Term 2 April Trustee Board	SLT
Student priorities report to come to a future Trustee Board to update the board on progress	04/12/23	~~February Trustee Board~~ April Trustee Board	TB
Board to determine approach to providing feedback for CE appraisals	04/12/23	Board	Board
More in depth 5-year annual plan to be brought to the Finance and Audit committee February 2024.	04/12/23	Bring to May FAC 2024	TR