Minutes of the Meeting of the Trustee Board

Date: 5th December 2024

Time: 14.00pm – 17.00pm

Location: Devonshire House, University of Exeter

Membership:

Alex Martin (AM) – President and Chair of the Board
Katy Willis (KW) – External Trustee and Deputy Chair of the Board
Harriet Jones (HJ) – External Trustee and Vice Chair of the Board
Ella Trudgeon (ET) – Student Trustee
Margaret Laithwaite (ML) – External Trustee
Reuben Sek (RS) – Student Trustee
Charles Jones (CJ) – External Trustee
Kira Brookes (KB) – Officer Trustee/ Student Living Officer
India Walton-Salmon (IWS)– Officer Trustee / Societies and Employability Officer
Thomas Tran (TT) – Officer Trustee/ Communities and Equality Officer
Sebastian Racisz (SR) – Officer Trustee / Education Officer
Edward O'Sullivan (EOS) – Student Trustee
Fanar Al-Derzi (FAD) – Student Trustee
Sophie Elliott (SE) – External Trustee

Apologies:
Ella Trudgeon (ET) – Student Trustee
Kira Brookes (KB) – Officer Trustee/ Student Living Officer
Cassie Thornton (CT) – Head of Marketing and Brand
Fanar Al-Derzi (FAD) – Student Trustee

In Attendance:
Ali Chambers (AC) – CEO and Board Secretary
Tom Barrass (TB) – Head of Student Engagement
Eleanor Walker (EW) – Head of Organisational Development
Tony Reissner (TR) – Interim Head of Finance (online)
Cindy Porter (CP) – Head of Finance
Dani Alexander (DA) – Leadership and Governance Manager, Board Clerk / Minute taker
Amy Holden (AH) – Insights and Influence Senior Manager

MEETING MINUTES

1. Welcome to Trustees
   The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. Apologies for absence
   Apologies received from Ella Trudgeon, Kira Brookes, Cassie Thornton and Fanar Al-Derzi.

3. Notification of Any Other Business
   CP highlighted a point of any other business regarding the Finance policy on alcohol at Guild internal events.

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 Chair highlighted that these minutes had been approved by the Trustee board offline to be made available for students on the Guild website.

   The Chair went through the action log and updated the Board on the progress of these actions. The Chair asked the Board for any comments or Questions.

   Strategic Register Review: The Chair mentioned the annual review of the Strategic Register, which was delayed due to team illness. They proposed discussing it in the next meeting. Trustees agreed to this approach.

7. Approval of the Accounts by External auditor
   CP provided an overview of the financial accounts, highlighting adjustments related to the pension scheme, office space, and restricted reserves. They noted that the accounts had been circulated and reviewed at the Finance and Risk Committee on the 7th November 2024.

   CP explained that the first three adjustments in the accounts were related to the pension scheme, including the write-off of the pension scheme liability on the balance sheet. CP mentioned an office space adjustment, which involved income and expenditure related to the use of Guild spaces and services. This adjustment is a common occurrence each year. CP discussed the movement of funds from restricted reserves to unrestricted funds, following an analysis and decision by the auditors. This movement is reflected in the statement of funds in the accounts.

CP noted the revaluation of a piece of artwork, which is now classified as a heritage asset and included in the balance sheet. This revaluation contributed to the overall financial position.

CP discussed the management letter from the auditors, noting only one minimal issue related to the fixed assets register. They also mentioned the letter of representation and the going concern judgement. The Chair of the Trustee board would sign the letter following the meeting.

Trustees approved the Audited accounts for 2023/2024.

8. Welcome Report

EJ joined the meeting at 14.15pm. EJ summarised the Welcome 2024 activities, highlighting the focus on belonging, event delivery, and marketing. They noted the positive impact and engagement from students. This included providing tips on managing finances and expanding event delivery to create meaningful and impactful opportunities.

EJ highlighted the expansion of event delivery, which aimed to create more meaningful and impactful opportunities for students. This included tailored approaches and events for different communities. EJ discussed the marketing strategy for Welcome 2024, which took a social media-first approach. This involved using social media as the primary communication tool, with emails and the website as secondary tools. The strategy focused on student-created content and day-in-the-life videos.

EJ noted the positive impact and engagement from students during Welcome 2024. The survey results showed that 91% of students felt their expectations were met or exceeded, and 46% of the total student population engaged with the Guild during the welcome period.

EJ and the Board discussed the Welcome Week strategy, including the society fairs and the feedback from committee members. They emphasised the importance of tailored approaches and collaboration with the University. They mentioned the partnership approach and the strategic goal of ensuring every student feels prepared and that they belong at Exeter.

The Board discussed the society fairs, noting the feedback from committee members. They highlighted the positive impact of having all societies in the Great Hall, which made it easier for students to find and engage with them. The Board discussed feedback from the previous Welcome Week and identified areas for improvement. They noted that some students felt overwhelmed, and there

was a need to ensure everyone feels part of the welcome experience.

The Board noted the report.

9. Student Engagement Report

AM presented the paper to the Board as read. AM discuss the paper which provided an overview of the representative work undertaken by the elected Officers in response to student priorities, as well as providing a summary of student engagement interventions and statistics since the last Trustee Board meeting. AM highlighted the joint approach to the report, with all Officers inputting their priority updates.

The Board discussed the Accessibility map, and 1-2 year timeline for completing this. TT confirmed there would be an EDI layer on the accessibility map. The Board discussed adjustments and mitigation, and how the University is working to bring these projects/ offerings together to provide a joined up approach. The Board also highlighted the Curriculum 4 Change project, and the need to approach assessments differently.

The Board discussed the need to communicate resources around accessibility and adjustments to students before they come to University .

The Board noted the paper.

10. CEO Report

AC discussed the paper with Board. AC highlighted the Wonkhe Festival and NUS Strategy Exchange.

AC discussed the Wonkhe Festival of Higher Education which they attended, and their key takeaways including a session led by the Open University who highlighted online delivery and lifelong learning impacts on the sector, and the need to be flexible with learning. AC also discussed a session which looked at the differences between the Canadian and UK education system, with a key focus for UK education systems being quality assurance.

TB discussed the NUS Strategy Exchange, and highlighted the sessions around NUS democracy and opportunities and risks across the sector. TB highlighted the sessions delivered by the Guild, and noted their takeaways from the conference.

The Board were asked for questions or comment.

The Board noted the paper.

11. Organisational Performance
    AH highlighted the Organisational Snapshot which provides an overview of how the Guild is performing as an organisation across Term 1 so far (September and October), the dashboard includes:
    - Guild Life Participation (GLP)
    - Social Impact Measures (KPIs)
    - Management Accounts
    - People Workforce Snapshot

    AH provided context on this data, which is regularly reviewed by Guild Managers and the Senior Leadership team every month, and from these reviews comes actions responding to the data. AH thanks Trustees for attending the data deep dive.

    Board is asked to note the dashboard, and are welcome to provide any reflections on the data shown and any opportunities or gaps they'd like us to explore further.

    Trustees discussed the People workforce snapshot and how this was useful for Trustees not in the People and Governance Committee. Trustees asked about sickness absence and whether this would include student staff. EW highlighted that Managers are working on being able to track student staff absence reasons to be able to provide support and see themes.

    The Board discussed the apathy approach to survey responses, and whether this was the right approach. The Board felt as though an option for those who don't know how to respond could be added to surveys going forward.

    AH and the Board discussed data sharing with the University to obtain data on students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds to enhance support and representation. AH and the Board discussed the need to measure KPIs going into strategy, drill down the demographic vs experience, and then elevation of outcome data and University data and how students are engaging with us/ their outcomes, and by demographic

    Bring back to July board

12. The meeting took a break from 15.44pm – 15.54pm

13. Student Representation Review Update
    TB introduced the representation review, explaining the need to evaluate the current representation model and explore new approaches. The review aims to address challenges and improve the effectiveness of student representation.

TB outlined the proposed pilots, which include student-led hubs and project-based roles. These pilots aim to test new models of representation and engagement, with a focus on evaluating their impact and scalability.

Board Approval: Tom emphasised the need for board approval to proceed with the proposed pilots. He highlighted the importance of committing to the evaluation process and using the findings to inform future decisions on representation models.

Action: Provide an update on the progress of the academic representation pilots, including feedback from students and Stakeholders. (Tom)

Trustees approved the new steps and pilot approach for the Student Representation Review

14. Stakeholder Evaluation Report 2024
AH presented the stakeholder evaluation, highlighting themes such as prioritisation of resources, partnership working, and insights. They discussed the need for better academic relationships and efficient collaboration.

AH discussed the overall sentiment of stakeholders is that the relationship is very positive, and continues to increase year on year. The results also tell us that we have achieved our KPI goal of 90% of stakeholders agree that we are an effective and influential partner, with our average score being 8 out of 10. Key themes from stakeholders include supporting them with prioritisation, challenges and risks of Officers and representatives, more partnership working and finding solutions together, efficiency of delivery and making change, and unlocking the power of insights for both organisations.

The Board were asked for comments or feedback.

Action: Enhance the engagement with academic stakeholders to ensure their participation in future evaluations and feedback processes. (Amy)

15. Guild Future Strategy
AC presented the Guild's future strategy, focusing on improving the world for students, increasing student employment, and aligning student priorities with the Guild's priorities. They also discussed the need for a more strategic staff structure by increasing the employment of students within the Guild.

AC discussed the potential of using AI tools to simplify data management and make tasks easier. They emphasised the importance of creating data in the right way to leverage these tools effectively.

AC highlighted the importance of involving more students and making it easier to employ them. They mentioned past efforts and the need for further collaboration with other universities and student unions. particularly mentioning the RGCU (Russell Group Universities) and the potential for strengthening links in the South West. SR mentioned a recent International Students survey conducted with the RGCU, highlighting the opportunity for further collaboration based on the data obtained.

AC and the Board discussed the need for a simplified offer for students, emphasizing the importance of strong relationships with the university and unified services to avoid confusion among students.

The Board discussed the concept of LLE, a new way of funding lifelong learning that allows students to earn credits over their lifetime. They discussed the potential impact on university success rates and the need for flexible, unified services.

CJ and EW left the meeting at 16.55pm

16. Items for Information

Trustees noted the following items:
Finance and Risk Committee minutes – To Note
People and Governance minutes – To Note
Budget and reforecast timeline – To Note
Guild Accountability Board meeting minutes – To Note

17. Any Other Business

Alcohol Policy for Staff events. Dani clarified the alcohol policy for staff events, noting that while the expense policy generally prohibits alcohol, there are exceptional circumstances where it may be allowed, such as staff parties and client entertainment. They emphasized the importance of having a risk assessment and process in place.

Action: Update the expenses and finance policy to reflect the allowance of alcohol in exceptional circumstances, including staff parties and discretionary events. Clarify the current policy on alcohol expenses, ensuring it includes the two exceptional events and discretionary circumstances for the CEO. (Cindy)

18. Feedback Form

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

19. Date of the Next Meeting – 10 March 2025

The Chair wrapped up the meeting, noting the next committee meeting in February and thanking everyone for their participation.

20.End of meeting

ACTION LOG

Action	Date of action	Deadline	Responsible for action	Progress and Impact
Create top level principles around EDI for the new building within the Estates Strategy	12/04/23	2023-2024	People and Culture, and Operation Team	On hold due to delay to new building
Update the expenses and finance policy to reflect the allowance of alcohol in exceptional circumstances, including staff parties and discretionary events. Clarify the current policy on alcohol expenses, ensuring it includes the two exceptional events and discretionary circumstances for the CEO. (Cindy)	5/12/24	February 2025	Head of Finance – Cindy Porter	Complete
Enhance the engagement with academic stakeholders to ensure their participation in future evaluations and feedback processes. (Amy)	5/12/24	To build in to planning for next stakeholder feedback evaluation in 2025	Insights and Influence Senior Manager	Ongoing