



MEETING OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

FRIDAY 22 NOVEMBER 2024

MINUTES

Present: Ms O Adesanya, Mr M Allan, Mr S Boyd, Mr J Boyer (Chair), Professor A Carr, Ms J Cecil, Professor I Craddock, Professor N Edwards, Ms J Huggins, Mr N Joicey, Mr N Keveth, Ms L Lambert, Ms X Levantis, Mr F Quek, Mr S Robertson, Professor J Squires (Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Provost), Professor E Welch (Vice-Chancellor), Professor Dame M Welham.

In attendance: Mr Michele Acuto (Pro Vice Chancellor, Global Engagement) – Item 7 (online)), Mr Colin Bates (External Auditor, PwC) – Item 11 (online)), Mr James Bigwood (Chief People Officer) – Item 14, Mr David Broughton (Internal Auditor) – Item 11 (online)), Ms Tracy Brunnock (Head of Equity, Diversity & Inclusion) – Item 14, Mr Michael Flay (Interim Deputy University Secretary and Head of Governance), Mr Steve Hall (Director of Student Experience and Deputy Director of Education and Student Success Division) – Item 12, Mr Tom Loader (Internal Auditor) – Item 11 (online)), Ms Lucy Penrose (Deputy Head of Governance), Lucinda Parr (Chief Operating Officer, Registrar and University Secretary), Mrs Victoria Jones Parry (Executive Director of Strategic Planning and Transformation) – Items 7 and 8 (online)), Mr Guy Poppy (Pro Vice Chancellor, Research and Innovation) – Item 7 (online)), Ms Z Pither (Assistant Director, Student EDI Strategy) – Item 14, Mr Matt Shute (Head of Planning and Business Intelligence, Strategic Planning and Transformation Management) – Item 7 (online)), Miss C Smith (Interim General Counsel) – Item 13, Mr Paul Smith (Director of Campus Operations) – Item 17 (Online)), Mr Peter Vermeulen (Chief Financial Officer), Mr Keith Woolley (Chief Digital Information Officer) – Item 6.

Apologies: Ms G Bowen, Mr L Coppi

1. WELCOMES, APOLOGIES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed members to today's meeting.
- 1.2 It was **NOTED** that a review of the HE sector was currently underway by the DfE, and the report was due to be published in June 2025. The Board was encouraged to see a greater degree of engagement and dialogue between the UK government and the HE sector.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- 2.1 There were none declared in advance, but during the meeting the Chair declared an interest during a particular discussion, and this was recorded in accordance with governance protocol.

3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

- 3.1 The Board **APPROVED** the minutes of the 20 September 2024 and the minutes of the 21 October meeting of the Board of Trustees as a true and accurate record (*on file*).

4. ACTIONS & MATTERS ARISING

- 4.1 **RECEIVED** and **NOTED:** the Board action register (*on file*).

- 4.2 **NOTED** that the action around Modern Network, which was being recommended for closure should not yet be closed until the pilots are completed. See section 6.5 below.
5. **CHAIR'S REPORT, INCL. FITNESS TO STUDY PANEL** (ref **BT/24-25/009**) (*on file*)).
- 5.1 RECEIVED and **NOTED**: the Chair's Report, which included a fitness to study appeal panel update, and also the Board forward plan for 24/25.
6. **EXECUTIVE REPORT AND QUESTIONS** (ref **BT/24-25/010**) (*on file*)).
- 6.1 RECEIVED and **CONSIDERED**: the Executive Report to the Board, specifically the recent political and financial developments.
- OfS Financial Sustainability of HE providers report
- 6.2 The Board **DISCUSSED** the recent [OfS Financial Sustainability of higher education providers in England](#), which had been published on 15th November 2024.
- 6.3 The following points were highlighted during the discussion:
- 6.3.1 The Vice-Chancellor emphasised the important role that research intensive universities would play in economic development and in meeting UK Government opportunities for growth and innovation and being a knowledge-led economy. The Board noted the importance of the University focussing on cost control whilst also seizing on the genuine investment opportunities that were available.
- 6.3.2 The Vice-Chancellor informed the Board that the clear message from DfE was that it was expecting the HE sector to work more closely with the FE sector, delivering in terms of widening participation, delivering in terms of upskilling, and delivering around a range of other areas, but above all being focussed on financial sustainability. The Vice-Chancellor then provided a more detailed update on DfE priorities for the sector in the coming months and years and what was being expected in terms of delivery.
- 6.3.3 From a financial sustainability aspect, the sector was becoming increasingly less stable over time, and that the simple erosion of fees over a decade has led to 40% of universities reportedly turning in a deficit last year. This could increase to 75% not least because the demographic growth in the UK had not led to the level of uptake in university places that had previously been expected. Most universities had seen a shrinking home UG market, and the only reliable and stable overseas market had been China. The University of Bristol had not had the same issues as other universities, but the sector as a whole had significantly fewer students than expected, and therefore it was clear that competition for market share was going to significantly intensify in the coming years. It was noted that there was now an enhanced risk of universities trying to compete on price in order to increase on volume.
- 6.3.4 The Vice-Chancellor, together with her counterparts at UUK, had already met with the Secretary of State for Education, Bridget Philipson MP, to map out what the sector could contribute to in return for the tuition fee increase. UUK would also be working to provide the Secretary of State with information about how the sector as a whole could contribute on a regional and civic basis.

The Chair of the Board recused himself from the discussion at this point in the meeting, due to a conflict of interest in relation to his membership on the DfE Board

- 6.3.5 REDACTED: Section 41 - Confidentiality
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The Chair of the Board rejoined the discussion at this point in the meeting

- 6.4 The following comments were made:

- 6.4.1 Board members appreciated the welcome shift in the UK Government's approach to the sector, but it remained extremely important to be very clear about articulating externally how the University of Bristol was contributing to the productivity and growth agendas which were core to this Government. It was agreed that the more the University articulated its positioning and how it could stand out competitively, the better.
- 6.4.2 The importance of bringing researchers together to address the big missions whilst also ensuring that academic groups understood that they would be supported in their research. It was noted that work was underway at Bristol to maintain the strength of research in our key ambitions. For example, the Faculty restructuring had put an emphasis on those Faculties to come up with individual innovative research strategies, and to undertake restructuring in their own schools, . This would better allow the University to focus on big picture opportunities.
- 6.4.3 **NOTED** that the Board would receive a paper and presentation from the PVC and Executive Dean of the Faculty of Health and Life Sciences at the January Board meeting.
- 6.4.4 REDACTED: Section 43 - Commercial interests
- 6.4.5 Staff trustees confirmed that the messaging around the stability of the sector, and the impact of external challenges on the University of Bristol, had been very clear and helpful.
- 6.4.6 REDACTED: Section 43 - Commercial interests
- 6.4.7 REDACTED: Section 43 - Commercial interests
- 6.4.8 The Board discussed the appetite for more profound change in the broader sector in relation to productivity, and also growth and the role that the sector played in that.
- 6.4.9 There was a discussion about employability and how to address the mix of courses so that the University could deliver in the academic context a set of skills to equip individuals for their future jobs. It was **AGREED** that for a future Board meeting, there would be a briefing on the 'Bristol Skills' framework.

ACTION: Secretary

Keith Woolley joined the meeting

Modern Network

- 6.5 The Chief Digital Information Officer introduced this item, and the following was **NOTED**:
- 6.5.1 REDACTED: Section 43 - Commercial interests
- 6.5.2 REDACTED: Section 43 - Commercial interests
- 6.5.3 REDACTED: Section 43 - Commercial interests

6.5.4

REDACTED: Section 43 - Commercial interests

6.5.5

REDACTED: Section 43 - Commercial interests

6.5.6

6.6 The following was **DISCUSSED**:

6.6.1 REDACTED: Section 43 - Commercial interests

6.6.2 The importance of continuing to make use of the learnings over the next five years, not just in the IT division but more broadly across the University from a Programme level and beyond.

6.6.3 The scope of the Programme had not been changed as a result of the findings.

6.6.4 Functionality and the fact that the network would eventually provide the University with much greater functionality than it did currently.

6.6.5 REDACTED: Section 43 - Commercial interests

ACTION: Chief Operating Officer

6.7 The Board appreciated the excellent level of detail provided today, emphasising how helpful it had been for the Board to truly understand the complexity. The Board was very supportive of the Chief Digital Information Officer and the programme team to work to address the challenges and push the programme forward.

Other matters

6.8 The Board noted that the Temple Quarter Enterprise Programme continued to be on time, on budget and on quality.

6.9 **EMBARGOED UNTIL 10TH DECEMBER:** The Board noted that the University had improved its position in the OfS sustainability rankings by 5 places – it was now 12th in the world, 4th in the UK and 7th in Europe. This represented a significant achievement, because as expected, it was getting significantly more competitive. The University had scored particularly highly in the social impact lens. Once the embargo had been lifted, there would be a significant amount of promotion about the results not least because this aligned extremely well with the University's emerging brand and represented an excellent narrative for how the University positioned itself in relation to sustainability. This success was also important in the overall QS world rankings as it was a strong

indicator of the direction of travel. The Board thanked everyone who had made this possible.

Guy Poppy, Michele Acuto, & Vikki Jones Parry joined the meeting

7. AUTUMN 2024 STRATEGY PERFORMANCE REPORT

7.1 RECEIVED and **CONSIDERED**: SPI progress report: paper ref **BT/24-25/0011** (on file)).

7.2 The DVC & Provost, and the Executive Director of Strategic Planning & Transformation introduced the report, and the following was **NOTED**:

7.2.1 REDACTED: Section 43 - Commercial interests

7.2.2 REDACTED: Section 43 - Commercial interests

7.2.3 REDACTED: Section 43 - Commercial interests

7.2.4 REDACTED: Section 43 - Commercial interests

7.2.5 Finally, it was noted that the SPIs were central to the University's annual planning cycle. Over the course of the next few months, the planning process will bring to life the reality of the financial climate, and what would be the sequencing and trajectory of the University's strategic goals through its faculties and divisions. As referenced earlier, an update would be presented to the Board in Spring 2025 once the IPP process had been finalised, the outcomes would be presented to the Board in May.

ACTION: Secretary

7.3 The PVC Research & Innovation introduced Goal 1, Research intensity, and the Board **DISCUSSED** how the University could achieve its target whilst improving research quality.

7.4 The PVC Global Engagement introduced Goal 4, Educational diversity, and the Board **DISCUSSED** the challenges around diversifying student recruitment, noting that a larger item on Global Education Plans would be presented to the Board at its meeting in January 2025 (this would cover goals 2 and 4).

7.5 The following was highlighted during the discussion:

7.5.1 REDACTED: Section 43 - Commercial interests

7.5.2 REDACTED: Section 43 - Commercial interests

7.5.3 REDACTED: Section 43 - Commercial interests

7.5.4 REDACTED: Section 43 - Commercial interests

7.5.5 REDACTED: Section 43 - Commercial interests

7.5.6 REDACTED: Section 43 - Commercial interests

7.6 The Board was overall **SUPPORTIVE** of the direction of travel.

*Guy Poppy, Michele Acuto and Matt Shute left the meeting.
Vikki Jones Parry remained in the meeting for the next item*

8. KEY UNIVERSITY RISK REVIEW

8.1 RECEIVED and **CONSIDERED**: the Key University Risk Register (KURR): (ref **BT/24-25/012**) (*on file*).

8.2 The Board **DISCUSSED** the University's risk profile and the controls in place to manage the Key University Risks.

8.3 The following was **NOTED**:

8.3.1 REDACTED: Section 43 - Commercial interests

8.3.2 Key improvements were being made to the KURR because of the Board approving the University's new Risk Appetite Statement, and a detailed update would be discussed at the Audit & Risk Committee meeting in March 2025. The work would first focus on the University's Risk Management Policy, guidance and training which would incorporate the new risk appetite statement. Next steps would be revising and improving the KURR template, specifically focussing on the conciseness of how we articulate risks and controls, more rigour around action dates for planned controls, and the clarity of the logic around the application of planned or current controls to our inherent risk score. Also looking at risk man framework below the KURR.

8.3.3 There were some helpful discussions at the Executive committee level already about how to best understand and manage university risks.

8.4 The following was discussed:

8.4.1 REDACTED: Section 43 - Commercial interests

8.4.2 The volatility of inflation particularly in the context of rising costs.

REDACTED: Section 43 - Commercial interests

8.4.3 As part of the improvements to the KURR, there was a suggestion made about the helpfulness of using a risk waterfall instead of a heatmap. This was becoming increasingly more common in the corporate sector. The Chair of Audit & Risk Committee agreed that this might be helpful,

8.4.4 REDACTED: Section 43 - Commercial interests

Vikki Jones Parry left the meeting

9. FINANCE REPORT

a. STUDENT UNION ANNUAL REPORT & ACCOUNTS

- 9.1 RECEIVED and **APPROVED**: paper ref: **BT/24-25/013a** (*on file*): the Annual Report and Financial Statements for the University of Bristol Students' Union for the year ended 31 July 2024. The Board was assured that the financial affairs of the Union had been properly conducted. This item had been starred for pre-approval.

b. MODERN SLAVERY STATEMENT

- 9.2 RECEIVED and **APPROVED**: paper ref: **BT/24-25/013b** (*on file*): the University of Bristol Modern Slavery Statement 2024. This item had been starred for pre-approval.


c. ENDOWMENT FUNDS ANNUAL PERFORMANCE & UNITISATION REPORT

- 9.1 RECEIVED and **APPROVED**: paper ref **BT/24-25/013c** (*on file*): the Endowment Funds Annual Performance and Unitisation Report 2023/24, specifically, the unit prices for the General Pool and Trustee Security Pool of the University's endowment. This item had been starred for pre-approval.
- 9.2 **NOTED**: the summary of the endowment performance report presented to FIC at its meeting of 1 Nov 2024 (see also agenda item 17, paper reference BT/24-25/021).

d. SUMMARY OF IMPORTANT FINANCIAL MATTERS

- 9.3 The Board **DISCUSSED** a detailed summary, provided by the Chief Financial Officer, of the most important financial matters.

- 9.4 The following was highlighted:

- 9.4.1 REDACTED: Section 43 - Commercial interests
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- 9.4.2 Staff trustees (both professional services and academic) commented that the financial framework had been extremely helpful to staff across all levels and that staff had appreciated the guidance.

- 9.4.3 REDACTED: Section 43 - Commercial interests
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- 9.4.4 REDACTED: Section 43 - Commercial interests
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- 9.4.5 A communications plan was underway, working together with the SU, in relation to the increase in tuition fees to ensure that students understood clearly the implications. One of the student trustees emphasised to the Board that broadly speaking many students were supportive of the tuition fee increases and realised that it was inherently sensible and in their interests.

- 9.4.6 There was a discussion about how to best influence the conversations taking place in Whitehall, specifically, how to best support the message of reform and good governance whilst also ensuring that any changes were going in the right direction.

REDACTED: Section 41 - Confidentiality

ACTION: Chief Financial Officer

10. FINANCIAL & STUDENT NUMBER FORECASTS FOR SUBMISSION TO THE OFS INCLUDING THE GOING CONCERN STATEMENT

- 10.1 RECEIVED and **CONSIDERED: (BT/24-25/014) (on file)**.

- 10.2 **APPROVED:** on the recommendation of the Finance & Investment Committee, the enclosed Financial Plans for submission to the Office for Students in line with regulatory requirements. It was noted that these forecasts had been reviewed and endorsed by the Finance and Investment Committee on the 1st November 2024.

- 10.3 **APPROVED:** on the recommendation of the Finance & Investment Committee, and with scrutiny from the Audit & Risk Committee, the Going Concern assessment for inclusion in the Annual Report and Financial Statements.

- 10.4 **APPROVED:** delegated authority to the Chief Financial Officer to agree and approve the final version of the return and execute minor changes should there be a need (defined as the impact of either one, or cumulative changes, not exceeding £5.0 million, aligned with the University's scheme of delegation thresholds). **NOTED:** that whilst this had not been explicitly discussed at FIC, the Chair of FIC was supportive of the approach, and the Board confirmed that it too felt comfortable.

- 10.5 REDACTED: Section 43 - Commercial interests

11. ANNUAL REPORT & FINANCIAL STATEMENTS 2023/24

- a. **FINANCIAL STATEMENTS SUMMARY OVERVIEW (BT/24-25/015a) (on file)**.
- b. **AUDIT COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT (BT/24-25/015b) (on file)**.
- c. **INTERNAL AUDITOR ANNUAL REPORT (BT/24-25/015c) (on file)**.
- d. **EXTERNAL AUDITOR ANNUAL REPORT AND LETTER OF REPRESENTATION (BT/24-25/015d) (on file)**.
- e. **AUDITED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (BT/24-25/015e) (on file)**.
- f. **ANNUAL REPORT OF THE REMUNERATION COMMITTEE (BT/24-25/015f) (on file)**.

Annual Report of the Remuneration Committee

- 11.1 **APPROVED:** on the recommendation of the Remuneration Committee, the Remuneration Committee Annual Report. This item had been starred for pre-approval.

Audit and Risk Committee Annual Report

- 11.2 The Chair of the Committee summarised the work of the Committee over the past year.

- 11.3 The External Auditor provided some additional assurances in relation to the work of the Audit and Risk Committee over the past year.

- 11.4 **APPROVED:** on the recommendation of the Audit & Risk Committee, the Audit & Risk Committee Annual Report.

Internal Audit Annual Report 2023/24

- 11.5 The Head of Internal Audit introduced his report.
- 11.6 **DISCUSSED:** the Internal Audit Annual Report 2023/24 which had been approved by the Audit & Risk Committee at its meeting on 4th November 2024.
- 11.7 The Chair of the Audit & Risk Committee emphasised the following in relation to the Committee's scrutiny of the report:
- 11.7.1 The breadth of risk areas and how the plan represented a broad, well-balanced, and robust internal audit programme.
- 11.7.2 Subsidiaries and the positive assurances which the Internal Auditor had given on the operating effectiveness and operating controls and risks of University wholly owned subsidiaries.
- 11.7.3 The helpful addition of an assessment of culture within the Annual Report.
- 11.7.4 Management's assessment of the Internal Audit team, which was positive. The extent to which the team understood what was occurring across the University, asking the right questions, and very much drilling down to identify the key issues. It was noted that staff across the University do take on board the findings and feedback from the Internal Audit Team because they could very clearly see the relevance of them. Management felt that the Internal Audit team appropriately challenged audits in a nuanced way because they understood the business.
- 11.7.5 The Committee was assured by the volume of open issues which was a strong indication of risk management and risk culture, and in particular the focus being taken at Operations Board, on high and medium priority actions was extremely helpful.
- 11.8 The Board was assured that management, the Audit & Risk Committee and the Internal Auditor continuously monitored the three consistent themes that emerged during the course of the year: consistency of processes, training and awareness and major projects in a changing landscape. The Internal Auditor also conducted follow-up reviews.

Annual Report and Financial Statements 2023/24

- 11.9 The Chair of the Audit & Risk Committee confirmed that at its meeting on 4th November, in line with its terms of reference, the Audit & Risk Committee scrutinised, specifically:
- 11.9.1 The wording in the annual governance statement, the statement of internal control and other disclosures relevant to the terms of reference of the Committee;
- 11.9.2 Any changes in, and compliance with, accounting policies, practices, and estimation techniques;
- 11.9.3 Any unadjusted mis-statements in the financial statements;
- 11.9.4 Any significant judgements in preparation of the financial statements;
- 11.9.5 Any significant adjustments resulting from the audit;
- 11.9.6 The Letter of Representation from the External Auditors;
- 11.9.7 The qualitative aspects of the financial reporting and;
- 11.9.8 The transparency and openness of reporting throughout the financial statements.
- 11.10 The Committee had sought and received assurances from the Finance & Investment Committee in terms of their scrutiny of the financial statements, via the Deputy Chair of that Committee who was present at that meeting.
- 11.11 The Chair of the Committee had sought by email confirmation from the Vice-Chancellor & President, as the Accountable Officer, that the accounts were true and fair and that there were no post balance sheet events that the Committee needed to be concerned about.

11.12 The Committee had also sought and received assurances from the members of the Executive that there was nothing to take into consideration in making this recommendation to the Board of Trustees.

11.13 The Committee confirmed at its meeting on 4 November that it could provide assurances to the Board of Trustees that the financial statements were in accordance with any accounts direction from the Office for Students (OfS) and that the accounting policies and judgements were fair, balanced and appropriate, and that the Annual Report and Financial Statements, taken as a whole, was fair, balanced and understandable, and provided the information necessary for stakeholders to assess the University's position and performance, business model and strategy.

11.134 REDACTED: Section 43 - Commercial interests

11.15 **APPROVED:** on the recommendation of the Audit & Risk Committee, the 2023-24 Annual Report & Financial Statements.

External Auditors Annual Report and Letter of Representation

11.16 The External Auditor introduced his report.

11.17 **APPROVED:** on the recommendation of the Audit and Risk Committee, the external auditor's report and Letter of Representation for 2023-24.

11.17 **AUTHORISED:** the Chair and the Vice Chancellor to sign the Annual Report & Financial Statements and the Letter of Representation on their behalf.

11.18 **NOTED:**

REDACTED: Section 22- information intended for future publication

*Colin Bates, David Broughton and Tom Loader joined the meeting
Colin Bates, David Broughton and Tom Loader left the meeting
Steve Hall joined the meeting*

12 UNIVERSITY SECRETARY'S REPORT

a. PREVENT DUTY MONITORING REPORT

12.1 RECEIVED and **APPROVED:** the Annual Report on Safeguarding (ref **BT/24-25/016a**) (on file)).

12.2 It was noted that with regards to staff training, there had been a discrepancy in HR category between the number of staff requiring training versus those that had been trained, and this was due to the University changing its definition of who should be trained and who shouldn't. An explanatory note would be provided to the OfS as required.

12.3 **APPROVED:** the Annual Report on Safeguarding for the period 1 August 2023 to 31 July 2024.

12.4 **AUTHORISED:** the Chair of the Board to sign the Accountability Declaration as part of the Prevent Return for submission to the Office for Students.

Steve Hall left the meeting

b. REVISIONS TO STATUTE & ORDINANCES: RESTRUCTUREING OF THE COO, REGISTRAR AND UNIVERSITY SECRETARY ROLE

12.5 RECEIVED and **APPROVED by SPECIAL RESOLUTION: (BT/24-25/016b)** and PowerPoint presentation (*on file*)).

12.6 The Board of Trustees **APPROVED:**

- 1 By special resolution, the amendment of the Statutes of the University by amending Statute 6.3.1 (Attendees of Court) as set out in the draft Statutes attached hereto, subject to (i) the consent of Court (as required by article 7.4 of the Charter); (ii) an Order of Council; and (iii) any amendments which the Chair of the Board considers to be necessary or expedient to secure the required Order of Council, the amendment of the Statutes to take effect from the date of the Order of Council.
- 2 The amendment of the Ordinances of the University by amending Ordinances 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 and 11 as set out in the drafts of those Ordinances attached hereto, such amendments to take effect from the date of this resolution.
- 3 The amendment of the Board Delegation Schedule as set out in the draft attached hereto, such amendments to take effect from the date of this resolution.
- 4 The updated role description for the University Secretary.

12.7 The Board **NOTED** the following:

12.7.1 The new role was within the current budget parameters.

- This practice was already happening all over the HE sector.
- This change emphasised the importance and criticality of independent governance and the enhanced scrutiny of the OfS.
- Risk Management and Business Continuity would continue to be located in the Division of Strategic Planning & Transformation.

12.8 REDACTED: Section 43 - Commercial interests

Clare Smith joined the meeting

13 **EXTERNAL SPEAKERS' CODE OF PRACTICE, AND FREE SPEECH ADVISORY GROUP TERMS OF REFERENCE**

13.1 RECEIVED and **APPROVED: (BT/24-25/017)** (*on file*)).

13.2 The Board of Trustees **DISCUSSED** the revised Procedure noting that:

- 13.2.1 The revisions to the Procedure had been considered by the Free Speech Advisory Group ("FSAG") which included within its membership Bristol SU's Liberation and Access Officer. FSAG's feedback had been incorporated into the revisions.
- 13.2.2 Both the Procedure and the revisions to it were co-produced by the University and Bristol SU through the Bristol SU Director of Community and Opportunity.
- 13.2.3 Academic Leadership Board ("ALB") had considered the proposed revisions, and its feedback had been incorporated into the proposed changes.
- 13.2.4 Operations Board had noted the revisions to the Procedure.
- 13.2.5 Whilst it was unusual to revise a procedure contained in the [Student rules and regulations | University Secretary's Office | University of Bristol](#) during the course of an academic year students were informed on registration (in accordance with CMA guidance) of the "in year" review of the Procedure. The University's website contained the following notification on the current procedure, in bold red print "**N.B. Please note that this policy will be reviewed during the 2024-2025 academic year**".
- 13.2.6 The changes proposed did not change the substance of the Procedure but were intended to:

- a. collate the aim and operating principles underpinning the Procedure i.e. the approach of the University and Bristol SU to events involving external speakers at the beginning of the Procedure rather than have them explained and, in some cases repeated throughout the procedure. Please note the amendment to include reference to the University's Values and that visiting dignitaries, such as Ministers, other politicians, religious leaders are also now assessed under this procedure (*Section 1 of the Procedure*);
 - b. direct staff users of the Procedure to the Freedom of Expression and Academic Freedom training available on Develop and relevant Guidance noting that no reference can be made to the Essential training available to staff until it is available within Develop (*Section 2.2(ii) of the Procedure*).
 - c. ensure that the timescales for submitting a self-assessment form for all events (whether on-line or in person) are clear and reflect the discussion by FSAG (*Section 2.3(i) of the Procedure*);
 - d. following FSAG's discussion relating to the potential significance of religious holidays in relation to a proposed date for an external speaker event, include wording to reflect that consideration should be given to a number of different areas when Event Organisers propose the date on which the event is to take place (*Section 2.3(iii) of the Procedure*).
 - e. explain more clearly that both the University and Bristol SU expect that the vast majority of events will be approved at the earliest point in the procedure (i.e. by the Event Organiser where they are a member of staff or by the Assessor) without the need to involve the Decision Maker (*section 2.3 (v) of the Procedure*);
 - f. clarify the position in respect of external users i.e. if the Event Organiser will be the member of staff organising the event not the external user themselves (*Section 2.3 (vi) of the Procedure*). Please also note that the name of the form linked at paragraph 3.3.1 will be changed to delete the words "or external user".
 - g. ensure that where an Event Organiser is a member of staff the Assessor is made aware of the event being organised at the earliest opportunity even if the matter is not referred to them for Assessment (*Section 3.3.2 of the Procedure*).
 - h. ensure, following FSAG's feedback that where an event is being organised outside the UK the Event Organiser consults with the relevant Global Engagement Team (international education, partnerships, civic or philanthropy) prior to either the event being permitted to go ahead or referring the matter to the Assessor. (*Section 3.3 bullet point 1 of the Procedure*);
 - i. ensure, following ALBs feedback, that where an academic is organising an event but that event involves, for example a staff group or Staff Network or a trade union it is assessed by the relevant Divisional Head (usually the Chief People Officer) rather than the academics Head of School (*Sections 4.1.2 and 4.1.3 of the Procedure*); and
 - j. explain more clearly when it might be appropriate to refer a matter to the Decision Maker (*Section 4.2.3.2 of the Procedure*).
- 13.3 There was a query about whether the University had benchmarked this code of practice with other universities. General Counsel confirmed that this had not been the case, however there had been a significant amount of activity in legal professional working groups within the sector looking at this. The Board was also assured that this document had external input into it from a law firm which advised the sector in these matters.
- 13.4 **APPROVED** the revisions to the External Speakers Code of Practice (the "Procedure") to the Board of Trustees, noting that a communications plan was in train.
- 13.5 **NOTED** the new Terms of Reference (ToRs) for the Free Speech Advisory Group.

*Clare Smith left the meeting
James Bigwood, Tracy Brunnock and Zoe Pither joined the meeting*

14 ANNUAL REPORT: EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION (STAFF AND STUDENTS) 23/24

14.1 RECEIVED and **APPROVED**: the Annual EDI Report 2023/24(**BT/24-25/018**) (*on file*)).

14.2 **NOTED**: that this report had also been discussed at length with the EEDI Oversight Committee and that in particular the committee had been very focussed on closing the black staff pay gap and black awarding gap, as well as issues around disability particularly in relation to neurodiversity. The Committee was working closely with the Chief Property Officer to move the dial on these key issues.

14.3 The following comments were made:

14.3.1 The EDI Governance restructure, and the importance of ensuring that the different groupings link directly back to the three strategic aims of the framework. In particular it would be important to ensure that the synergies between the groupings was being realised so that there was no duplication of work, plenty of sharing of best practice, and also ensuring that the groupings were clear on their objectives.

14.3.2 Sharing positive examples of good practice more widely across the University and externally. Board members emphasised that given the richness of the case studies in the annual report, it would be helpful to share those so that the value of them helped to create more that positive culture and environment. The Board noted that the Chief Property Officer would be taking some stakeholder engagement proposals, amongst other matters, to the DVC & Provost and then to UEB in due course. The University was also making use of the University Leadership Network in the Spring to help provide a wider understanding of the work that was currently underway, and that this represented one part of the culture shift in this area. Further, it was noted that externally the University was reinvigorating an existing community of practice – an EDI Forum – to share the great work being done across the community to bring case studies to life.

14.3.3 It was noted that in the new Faculty Leadership structures, the APVC's would have Academic Directors reporting to them, and their portfolio would be thematic – quality of teaching, portfolio, curriculum, and inclusion, belonging and community. This was to ensure that EDI was embedded as mainstream into their roles.

14.3.4 It was noted that for the 2024/25 Annual EDI Report, Reparative Futures would feature as a key highlight.

14.4 **APPROVED**: on the recommendation of the Equity, Equality and Diversity Oversight Committee the University Annual EDI Report for staff and students, for the academic year 2023/24, showcasing work undertaken during 23/24, and the supporting staff and student diversity monitoring report. Both the Annual Report and the diversity monitoring reports must be published externally on the University website by 31st December 2024.

James Bigwood, Tracy Brunnock and Zoe Pither left the meeting

15 REPORT FROM INFRASTRUCTURE PLANNING COMMITTEE

15.1 RECEIVED and **NOTED**: paper ref: (**BT/24-25/019**) (*on file*)).

16 REPORT FROM NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE

16.1 RECEIVED and **DISCUSSED**: the report from the Nominations Committee meeting held on 1st November 2024 (**BT/24-25/020**) (*on file*)).

16.2 **APPROVED**: the Nominations Committee Terms of Reference 2024/25.

16.3 **APPROVED**: the appointment of the Halpin Trust to conduct the External Effectiveness Review and the indicative scope of the External Effectiveness Review, including the review timeline, methodology and costings.

16.4 **APPROVED**: the proposed Terms of Reference and an outline of the membership for the Effectiveness Review Steering Group. Board members were encouraged to put themselves forward to join the Steering Group.

16.5 REDACTED: Section 43 - Commercial interests

- 16.6 **AGREED:** that the Board would benefit from the 12-month review opportunity so that members could see how the Board has progressed against the review recommendations.

Paul Smith joined the meeting

17 REPORT FROM FINANCE & INVESTMENT COMMITTEE

- 17.1 RECEIVED and **CONSIDERED:** the report from the Finance & Investment Committee meetings on 21st October and 1st November 2024: **(BT/24-25/021)** (*on file*)).

- 17.2 **NOTED:** that on 21 October 2024 at an Extraordinary Meeting, the Committee had **AGREED** to **RECOMMEND** to the Board of Trustees a Business case for [REDACTED]
[REDACTED: Section 43 - Commercial interests]

- 17.3 **APPROVED:** on the recommendation of the Committee, the Finance & Investment Committee Terms of Reference 2024/25.

- 17.4 **CONSIDERED:** [REDACTED]
[REDACTED: Section 43 - Commercial interests]

- 17.5 [REDACTED: Section 43 - Commercial interests]

- 17.6 **NOTED:** that at the April meeting of the Infrastructure Planning Committee there would be a discussion about the strategy for the University's residential requirements, which would also include questions around affordability, and the types of accommodation that was required and where.

Paul Smith left the meeting

18 REPORT FROM EEDI OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

- 18.1 RECEIVED and **NOTED:** the report of the EEDI Oversight Committee **(BT/24-25/022)** (*on file*)).

- 18.2 The following was highlighted to the Board by the Chair of the Committee:

- 18.2.1 [REDACTED: Section 43 - Commercial interests]

- 18.2.2 The Committee was beginning to move more into the people and culture space, in addition to looking at EDI matters. It was noted that there would be further discussions on this point at a future Board meeting.

19 REPORT FROM HONORARY DEGREES COMMITTEE

- 19.1 RECEIVED and **APPROVED**: the awarding of the honorary degrees as listed: **(BT/24-25/023)** (*on file*)).
- 19.2 **NOTED**: that communication between the University and those listed was ongoing and that members are therefore asked not to share more widely.

20 REPORT FROM AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE (SEPTEMBER AND NOVEMBER MEETINGS)

- 20.1 RECEIVED and **NOTED**: the discussions which were had at the meetings held on 23 September and 04 November 2024: **(BT/24-25/024)** (*on file*)).
- 20.2 **NOTED**: that the approvals around the University Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year ending 31 July 2024 and the External Auditor's Letter of Representation were approved earlier under agenda item 11.

21 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- 21.1 There was none.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING: 31 JANUARY 2025