



MEETING OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

FRIDAY 3 OCTOBER 2025

Room 5.22, Senate House, 0900 - 1600

DRAFT MINUTES

Present: Mr Steven Boyd, Mr Jack Boyer (Chair), Professor Andrew Carr, Ms Jessica Cecil, Ms Lucy Collins, Professor Ian Craddock, Professor Natalie Edwards, Ms Jilly Huggins, Mr Nick Keveth, Miss Arta Kurti, Mr Freddie Quek, Mr Stephen Robertson, Professor Judith Squires (until after item 9), Professor Evelyn Welch, Professor Dame Melanie Welham, Miss Sophera Whiu

In attendance: Mr Michael Flay (University Secretary and Director of Governance); Mr David Stock (Interim Head of Governance, minutes), Mr Peter Vermeulen (Chief Financial Officer); Professor Tansy Jessop (Pro Vice-Chancellor Education & Students), Professor Kate Whittington (Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor Education Quality & Standards) and Professor Sarah George (Dean of Health and Life Sciences), all for item 8; Miss Sharan Khemlani (Postgraduate Education Officer), Miss Ella Lovibond (Sports and Student Development Officer), Miss Lucy Pears (Student Living Officer), Miss Katie Poyner (Union Affairs Officer), Miss Mia Stevens (Undergraduate Education Officer), Miss Linlu Ye (Equality, Liberation and Access Officer), Miss Jessie Yeung (International Students Officer), all for item 9; Professor Michele Acuto (Pro Vice Chancellor for Global Engagement), Dr John McWilliams (Director of Civic and Alumni Engagement) and Professor Tom Sperlinger (Academic Director (Civic Spaces)), all for item 10; Mrs Mary Millard (Executive Director of Faculty Operations) and Mr Chris Bowden (Associate Programme Director) for item 11.

Apologies: Ms Lucie Lambert, Ms Ololade Adesanya, Mr Mark Allan, Ms Gillan Bowen

1. WELCOMES, APOLOGIES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

1.1 The Chair welcomed members to today's meeting.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

2.1 There were none.

3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

3.1 RECEIVED and **APPROVED:** the minutes from the 18 July 2025 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*).

5. CHAIR'S REPORT (ref BT/25-26/001) (*on file*).

5.1 RECEIVED and **NOTED:** the Chair's Report, and the Board forward workplan for 25/26.

5.2 The Chair invited Trustees to propose topics for discussion at the Development Day on 26 March 2026 and noted that the day would be split into three strands: a strategic strand, a research strand, and a strand that fed into the Board's understanding of the wider work of the University.

6. EXECUTIVE REPORT

- 6.1 RECEIVED and **DISCUSSED**: paper ref **BT/25-26/002** (*on file*).
- 6.2 The Board and the Executive noted their sympathies with the University's Jewish community following the terrorist attack on a synagogue in Manchester on 2 October 2025. The Vice-Chancellor noted that she had contacted the University's Jewish Society to assure students of their safety on campus and to maintain an ongoing dialogue regarding campus culture.
- 6.3 In response to questions from the Board, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor & Provost noted that the rebaselining exercise, which would be important to set realistic recruitment targets and strengthen financial planning, would be challenging but that the University remained stable and confident about the future. The University Executive Board meeting on 13 October 2025 would be a key milestone in forecasting and supporting clarity on potential calls on the contingency budget.
- 6.4 The Board recognised that the University's approach to Clearing had been key to ameliorating the effects of under-recruitment in some areas, although the replacement of some headcount at postgraduate level with home undergraduate students meant the deficit stood at around [Section 22 – Information intended for future publication]. In response to questions from Board members around student progression and retention, the Executive noted that UCAS data showed that students recruited through Clearing were likely to have previously attended an open day and that entry requirements had not been relaxed; the Executive recognised the need to monitor progression and retention rates of students who had joined via Clearing.
- 6.5 The Board noted that the Executive would model the impact of various iterations of the proposed international student fee levy and consider those impacts in scenario-planning activities around the size and shape of the University's student body. The Board welcomed the Executive's pragmatic approach and agreed with the assessment that the University was in a relatively strong position.
- 6.6 In response to questions from Board members, the Executive agreed that it would be important to support key academic colleagues, including Heads of School, to consider a wide perspective in terms of new course development and curriculum evolution. The Board and Executive also agreed that it would be important to work closely with industry partners to understand the evolving needs of the workplace, including in terms of Artificial Intelligence.
- 6.7 In response to questions from Board members, the Executive agreed that it would consider all options for the delivery of teaching and learning, including online postgraduate qualifications; that it would be important for the University to clearly communicate to the market its USP; and important to take full advantage of the new opportunities presented by developments at the Temple Quarter and Mumbai Enterprise Campuses. The Executive also noted that, alongside income-generating activity, cost-saving efforts such as the Professional Services Transformation Project (PSTP) would continue.
- 6.8 In response to questions from Board members, the Chief Operating Officer & Registrar confirmed that the Modern Network project, which had returned to Red status due to resource constraints, was now reporting to the Capital Programme Board via the Chief Property Officer. The Board offered their thanks to the Chief Digital and Information Officer, Keith Woolley, on his departure from the University and noted that a recruitment exercise for an interim replacement would begin.

7. FINANCE REPORT

- 7.1 RECEIVED and **DISCUSSED**: the Finance Report (**BT/25-26/003**) (*on file*).

- 7.2 The Chief Financial Officer (CFO) presented the paper and highlighted that negotiations for the new RCF with NatWest had concluded and it was now in use. The Board recognised that the University's financial performance was robust and based on decisive actions taken by the Executive to maximise income and realise cashable savings, including through the PSTP.
- 7.3 The Chair encouraged Board members to read the Gillies Report into the collapse of the University of Dundee, and all agreed that it would be important to continue to remain vigilant about the University's finances and governance protocols. The CFO reported that stress-testing and scenario-planning activities would continue and would be shared openly with the Board – any Board member who wished to would be welcome to discuss the University's finances with financiers and to attend any financial meetings. The Board agreed the importance of a commitment to growth in key areas and supported the Executive's imminent rebaselining exercise.
- 7.4 The Board highlighted the PSTP and the new Culture and Inclusion Committee (CIC) as empowering activities which were designed to increase transparency and ensure that any staff who had concerns felt able to raise them within a constructive and supportive professional culture.

8. EDUCATION AND STUDENT EXPERIENCE: NATIONAL STUDENT SURVEY (NSS) RESULTS

- 8.1 RECEIVED and **DISCUSSED**: the report of the Committee (**BT/25-26/004**) (*on file*).
- 8.2 The PVC for Education and Students presented the NSS results and associated analysis, highlighting the positive impact of increased collaboration between professional services and academic colleagues.
- 8.3 The Board asked the Executive to consider ways in which its Committees, in particular CIC, could support less-well-performing areas of the University to learn from those areas, such as the Dental School, which had improved their results.
- 8.4 In response to questions from the Board, the Executive agreed the benefits of sharing examples of 'good feedback' University-wide to increase standards and consistency, thereby improving the student experience of assessment and feedback; Heads of School, School Education Directors and Associate PVCs were collaborating increasingly closely to support the sharing of good practice across all areas of the University.
- 8.5 The Executive also agreed with the suggestion of the Board that a focus on larger cohorts might have a greater impact and noted that the University was prioritising support for the School of Humanities, the Computer Science course, and the Law School.
- 8.6 In response to questions from the Board, the Executive agreed that closing feedback loops and clear explanations of marking schemes would be important to increasing NSS results for student experience of assessment and feedback. It was also agreed that analysis of OfS Longitudinal Education Outcomes (LEO) data and utilising the opportunities presented by the Alumni Association might help students to more clearly understand their post-university options. The Board also noted that the Executive would consider any industrial action as a potential threat to positive progress on NSS outcomes.

9. SU SABBATICAL OFFICERS PRESENTATION

- 9.1 The Board RECEIVED and **DISCUSSED** a presentation from the Students' Union Sabbatical Officers. The Board and Sabbatical Officers discussed the intersectionality of student mental health issues and agreed that the Board and the Executive supported student involvement in sporting activity as it could be beneficial to mental health and could foster a lifelong positive habit. The Sabbatical Officers noted that the Students' Union would continue to promote intramural sports as a cheaper alternative to

participation in BUCS and continue to explore opportunities available to postgraduate students over the summer.

9.2 The Board noted that the most significant pressure on most students' finances came from rent, and that the housing stock available to most students was often in a poor state of repair, and welcomed the work of the Students' Union on the issue.

9.3 In response to questions from Board members, the Sabbatical Officers confirmed that the Students' Union was proactively offering support to students from Jewish and Palestinian communities, including working with the University's multifaith chaplaincy.

10. Civic Engagement: APVCs and Reparative Futures

10.1 The Board RECEIVED and **DISCUSSED** a presentation from the PVC for Global Engagement, in which he confirmed that a Community Engagement Plan would be developed, following the same consultative process as the International Strategy. The Board recognised that community engagement was a key priority for the current Government and welcomed the interest shown by a number of competitor institutions in visiting the University's Hartcliffe and Withywood micro-campus as an example of effective community engagement. The Board noted that Oxford Economics had calculated the Gross Value Added of the Hartcliffe and Withywood micro-campus to be £1.13bn. The Board welcomed the Executive's commitment to long-term relationship-building with the local community and the launch of a Civic Register to capture centrally wider activity with a civic impact.

10.2 The Board welcomed the impact of the 'For Bristol' microsite of the University's website, which communicates learning and participation opportunities for the local community as well as events and job vacancies. In response to questions from the Board, the Executive agreed that the West of England Mayoral Combined Authority and local NHS Foundation Trusts represented opportunities to work collaboratively on civic engagement. The Board recognised the challenge presented by the local political landscape, with different authorities under the leadership of different parties.

10.3 The PVC for Global Engagement also provided the Board with a short update on the Mumbai Enterprise Campus (MEC) and confirmed in response to questions from Board members that the University was considering carefully the risks associated with transnational education; the Director and Executive Dean of the MEC, a role which was currently being recruited, would report to UEB via the DVC & Provost.

11. US2030: PROFESSIONAL SERVICES TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME (PSTP)

11.1 RECEIVED and **DISCUSSED**: paper ref: **BT/25-26/005** (*on file*).

11.2 The Board NOTED the content of the update on the PSTP, a programme which they agreed would be key to effective delivery of the 2030 Strategy. The Chair welcomed the work which had been conducted on role families, which was complex and had been delivered to a very high standard.

11.3 In response to questions from Board members, the Executive agreed that staff communication would be crucial and that it would not be possible to provide a blanket answer to all staff on the impacts of PSTP as they would vary between business units and individual roles. The Board welcomed the Executive's transparent approach to PSTP as a cost-saving exercise and endorsed the sharing of detailed information with staff at all levels, encouraging that it should clearly articulate the intention to address potential staff anxieties caused by such a large-scale change programme.

12. REPORT FROM AUDIT & RISK COMMITTEE

12.1 RECEIVED and **NOTED**: the verbal report from the Deputy Chair of Audit & Risk Committee.

13. REPORT FROM CULTURE & INCLUSION COMMITTEE

13.1 RECEIVED and **APPROVED**: the paper ref: **(BT/25-26/006)** (*on file*).

13.2 The Board NOTED the report from the Chair of the Culture & Inclusion Committee and **APPROVED** the Culture and Inclusion Committee Terms of Reference 2025/26.

****CONSENT ITEMS****

14. REPORT OF THE UNIVERSITY SECRETARY

14.1 The Board RECEIVED and **APPROVED** the proposed amendments to Ordinance 8: paper ref **BT/25-26/007a** (*on file*).

14.2 The Board RECEIVED and **APPROVED** the proposed amendment to the Purpose of the Second University of Bristol Fund (Zutshi Smith Lecture Series): paper ref **BT/25-26/007b** (*on file*).

15. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

15.1 No other business was proposed to the Chair.

16. The date of the next meeting was confirmed as 21 November 2025