MEETING OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

FRIDAY 27 March 2026

OSBORNE CLARK, 0900 - 1500

MINUTES

Present: Jack Boyer (Chair), Ololade Adesanya, Mark Allan, Steven Boyd, Dr Andrew Carr, Jessica Cecil, Lucy Collins, Professor Ian Craddock, Jilly Huggins, Nick Keveth, Arta Kurti, Lucie Lambert, Freddie Quek (online), Stephen Robertson, Professor Judith Squires, Professor Evelyn Welch, Professor Dame Melanie Welham, Sophera Whiu

In attendance: Héloïse Aboulker (Governance Apprentice), Michael Flay (University Secretary & Director of Governance), Lucinda Parr (Chief Operating Officer & Registrar), Hannah Quinn (Chief of Staff), Peter Vermeulen (Chief Financial Officer); for items 6 and 9: Professor Michele Acuto (Pro Vice Chancellor for Global Engagement); for items 8 and 10: Marty Reid (Director of Innovation); for item 8: Matt Costain (TQ Programme Director), Professor Tom Sperlinger (Academic Director, Civic Spaces); for item 10: Professor Michele Barbour (Associate Pro Vice Chancellor for Research and Enterprise), Dr Sophie Collet (Executive Director of Research, Enterprise, Innovation), Professor Ashley Montanaro (Professor of Quantum Computation), Professor Guy Poppy (Pro Vice Chancellor Research and Innovation), Andrew Wilson (Head of Commercialisation); for item 11: Steve Hall (Executive Director for Education and Students)

Apologies: Professor Natalie Edwards

1. WELCOMES, APOLOGIES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

1.1 The Chair welcomed the members and attendees to the meeting.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

2.1 There were none.

3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

3.1 RECEIVED and **APPROVED**: the minutes from the 30 January 2026 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

5.1 RECEIVED and **APPROVED**: the Chair's Report ref **BT/25-26/033** (*on file*),

5.2 *REDACTED [Section 43 – trade secrets and prejudicial to commercial interests]*

5.3 **NOTED** that on 4 February the Board approved via email in accordance with (*Ordinance 5, paragraph 11.1: Decisions without a meeting*) an the increase in the number of Deputy Vice-Chancellors from one to two, for the period 1 July 2027 to 1 July 2028, and approved the appointment of Professor Judith Squires as Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Temple Quarter) on a fractional contract, for the period 01/01/27 – 01/07/2028, as per (*Ordinance 7, 1.1.2*).

PVC for Global Engagement joined the meeting for this item.

6. EXECUTIVE REPORT

6.1 The Vice-Chancellor presented paper reference **BT/25-26/034** (*on file*), which the Board RECEIVED and **DISCUSSED**.

6.2 NOTED the report of the Executive Group, which was structured into the three Strategic Pillars and their Enablers, together with an introduction from the Vice-Chancellor.

6.3 The Board discussed the latest admissions data that was shared in advance via the paper and the further analysis presented on the day. The Board queried trends specific to the Business School. In response the Executive described admissions as softer overall when compared to some areas noting that UG was performing better than PG. It was noted that within the Business School the University was able to make offers between different programmes in a nuanced way to get close to the overall target across the School. In terms of the Chinese market within the Business School, it was noted that over the last five years the accounting and finance market had declined. The University's response had been to modify its offer-making to focus on interdisciplinary offerings thereby forming links between the Business School to and engineering programmes in particular those based in Temple Quarter Enterprise Campus (TQEC).

6.4 The Board queried the number and extent of courses specifically in the area of Artificial Intelligence. In response it was noted that the Masters programmes in this area based at TQEC had received a very high level of demand and the University was exploring the extent of the overshoot that could be managed whilst still maintaining quality of provision. The University was mindful that demand in this area could be transient and volatile. An additional factor was ensuring cyber security – the delivery of certain courses/ programmes required dedicated secure space and therefore associated investment that needed to be in use of a number of years to ensure value.

6.5 In response to a query about the potential for *professors of practice* within the AI teaching sphere, the Executive noted that these types of arrangement did not replace academic staff and noted analogous situations in medicine and business school environments. It was noted that the University had already launched and started to recruit to its TQEC and Mumbai Enterprise Campus (MEC) Visiting Professor Scheme.

6.6 In terms of broad overseas student market trends, the Board observed that the data seemed to indicate that the anticipated China risk was now materialising and that this demonstrated the value of MEC in helping to access the India market. The Board queried whether Malaysia was now being considered as a regional alternative to China and whether investment there had the potential to tackle reducing numbers. In response the Executive noted that the Malaysian HE sector was now experiencing high growth in Chinese student recruitment. The Executive was mindful that the University was aware of the risk of over reliance on China but noted that the University was still seeing success in this market, with a high ranking helping to retain interest.

6.7 The Board discussed the variation in measures of performance between different disciplines and Schools. It was noted that areas that performed well in one metric did not always perform well in others. For example, Earth Sciences and Geography were high ranking in terms of QS scores but at present did not meet the 50% operating target. By contrast Engineering had a relatively low QS ranking but research income per student was high. It was noted that a larger proportion of research within Engineering was nationally partnered as opposed to international and that this impacted this area's QS rankings.

6.8 The Board requested that it receive additional information on the QS rankings (*this was sent via email the same day by the Chief of Staff.*)

6.9 In response to a question about whether courses could be merged to manage declining numbers, the Executive responded that joint honours had been used previously in this way.

The Executive noted that changes in sector-level provision could also influence intake numbers – a recent example was that the closure of modern languages departments at competitor institutions had caused increased applications to the University's equivalent courses. The Executive emphasised, though, that student numbers in the School of Modern Languages remained low and the School did not currently meet the 50% operating target. Therefore to ensure resilience for the future, this School was an area where workforce planning activities would need to be applied.

6.10 In response to a question about the impact on the University of recent global conflict, the Executive advised that at present changes were minimal but that this was being kept under review. Areas of potential concern were reduced student mobility and a negative impact on research funding.

6.11 The Board discussed the risk to the University in relation to Covid compensation claim against universities, and the recent settlement between University College London (UCL) and the Student Group Claim was noted. It was noted that on 23 February the Chair of the Board of Trustees, the Deputy Chair of the Board of Trustees and the Chair of Audit and Risk Committee had received a briefing on this subject by General Counsel and Director of Legal Services. The potential for a claim or a settlement would feature in the stress tests the Finance team would include in the budget paper that would be presented to FIC in April and the Board of Trustees in May 2026.

6.12 The Board discussed the impact that the attraction and recruiting of high-calibre academics to strategic appointments could have on a variety of outcomes, in particular in those areas where the University was seeking to expand. The Board requested that the Executive present a paper outlining approaches on this subject to a future meeting.

Action: University Secretary and Governance Team

7. UNIVERSITY FINANCES:

7.1 RECEIVED and **DISCUSSED**: the **BT/25-26/035** (*on file*).

7.2 *REDACTED [Section 43 – trade secrets and prejudicial to commercial interests]*

7.3 The Board discussed an article entitled Universities: get ready for the new normal - LSE Higher Education, which had been included in the paper. In particular, in the context of the changes to the nature of research funding, the Board reflected as to whether this in time would create a two-tier structure for academic staff (as had emerged in the US and Australia), i.e. permanent contracts for research staff versus temporary, renewable (on a course-by-course basis) contracts for teaching only staff. The Board discussed the role of AI in the HE sector, noting that this area crossed over between teaching (both in terms of delivery and assessment) and operations.

8. TEMPLE QUARTER ENTERPRISE CAMPUS (TQEC)

8.1 RECEIVED and DISCUSSED: the Report **BT/25-26/036** (*on file*).

8.2 The Chair welcomed Matt Costain (TQ Programme Director), Tom Sperlinger (Academic Director of Civic Spaces) and Marty Reid (Director of Innovation), alongside the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Provost, who presented to the Board in turn *(presentation on file.)*

8.3 In discussion the Board noted that the opening of the TQEC represented an international marketing opportunity as well as a national one. The deliberate linkages, resonance and parallel between TQEC and Mumbai Enterprise Campus (MEC) were also discussed. In terms of enterprise, the Board queried how TQEC would support regional aspirations set within national objectives. In response the Executive noted that both the University's existing and future partners thought on a global scale as did researchers, therefore messaging needed to go beyond the regional and national perspective and project internationally.

8.4 The Board queried what the key risk was for TQEC between now and its opening. In response, the Executive noted that delay in opening to students as planned was now the most primary risk. To ensure that this risk did not materialise, the team had already defined activities that could be paused to allow this primary objective to be delivered on time - potential scenarios had been mapped out alongside business continuity protocols.

8.5 In response to a question, the Executive outlined how access to the main building at TQEC would differ and be aligned with other University spaces. It was noted that the main atrium area on the ground floor would be a public space with various levels of restricted access through the building beyond the ground floor.

9. MUMBAI ENTERPRISE CAMPUS REPORT

9.1 The Pro Vice-Chancellor, Global Engagement presented to the Board *(presentation on file).*

10. RESEARCH AND INNOVATION: COMMERCIALISATION

10.1 RECEIVED and **DISCUSSED** paper ref: **BT/25-26/037** (*on file*).

10.2 The Chair welcomed Michele Barbour (Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor Enterprise and Innovation), Sophie Collet (Executive Director, DREI), Guy Poppy (Pro Vice-Chancellor, Research and Innovation), Ashley Montanaro (Professor of Quantum Computation), Marty Reid (Director of Innovation) and Andrew Wilson (Head of Commercialisation), who addressed the Board in turn *(presentations on file).*

10.3 In discussion the Board noted that *family offices* alongside Technology Readiness Levels (TRL) could usefully be explored by the University in conjunction with Quantx.

10.4 The Board queried how this area of activity was placed within the context of the University Strategy and whether if this function had more staff the number of spin outs be increased significantly. In response the Executive noted that at present there was a ceiling impacted by team size but that the broad base of research at the University was to an extent also a limitation - increased activity to support future relationship-building would have an impact, given time.

10.5 *REDACTED [Section 43 – trade secrets and prejudicial to commercial interests]*

11. STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING ANNUAL REPORT

11.1 RECEIVED and **DISCUSSED**: the paper ref: **BT/25-26/038** (on file).

11.2 The Executive Director for Education and Students presented to the Board (*presentation on file*).

11.3 The Board discussed the achievements and challenges during 2024/25 and priorities for 2025/26 detailed in the Student Support and Wellbeing Report. The Board posed questions to the Executive Director for Education and Students on the specifics of certain datasets presented in the paper, and responses were provided during the meeting.

11.4 On behalf of both the wider Executive and the Board of Trustees, the Vice-Chancellor expressed her thanks to the Executive Director for Education and Students and his team for their work in this important area.

12. REPORT FROM INFRASTRUCTURE PLANNING COMMITTEE

12.1 RECEIVED and **NOTED**: paper reference **BT/25-26/039** (*on file*).

13. REPORT FROM FINANCE AND INVESTMMENTS COMMITTEE

13.1 RECEIVED and **APPROVED:** the paper ref: **BT/25-26/040** (*on file*).

13.2 **APPROVED** on the recommendation of the Committee, the Finance & Investments Committee Terms of Reference 2025/26, revised in relation to changes to pension matters only.

13.3 **NOTED** the remainder of the report.

14. REPORT FROM AUDIT AND RISK CMMITTEE

14.1 RECEIVED and **APPROVED:** the paper ref: **BT/25-26/041** (*on file*).

14.2 **NOTED** the discussions held at the meeting of the Audit and Risk Committee held on 2 March 2026.

14.3 **APPROVED** on the recommendation of the Audit and Risk Committee the 'by exception' report on the Key University Risk Register.

15. REPORT FROM NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE

15.1 RECEIVED and **NOTED:** the paper ref: **BT/25-26/042** (*on file*).

Consent Items

16. UNIVERSITY SECRETARY'S REPORT

16.1 **APPROVED** Ordinance 4 – changes related to Finance and Investments Committee

16.2 **APPROVED** Acceptance and Refusal of Donations Policy

16.3 **APPROVED** Board Delegation Schedule

16.4 **APPROVED** Student Complaints Annual Report

16.5 **APPROVED** Access and Widening Participation Plan

16.6 **APPROVED** University of Bristol Annual Statement on Research Integrity

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as 22 May 2026.