

the
GOVERNING BODY

**MINUTES of the Governing Body Business Meeting held on Tuesday,
25 February 2025 in room 120, Queen Anne Court, Greenwich Campus, Park Row,
Greenwich SE10 9LS and via Microsoft Teams, held at 17.00**

Present:

Mr C McWilliam (Chair)	Ms T King
Mr A Chowdhury	Mr M Orr
Ms P Coles	Mr R Patel
Professor J Harrington (Vice-Chancellor & CEO)	Ms J Seehra-Pearce
Mr R Hicks (via Teams)	Mrs E Sideris
Ms B Hill CBE	Dr S Sweeney

In attendance:

Ms R Ashton (Executive Director, Student & Academic Services (item 24/32))
Mrs T Brighton (Governance Support Manager)(minutes)
Ms G Brindley (Executive Director of People)(Item 24/33)
Ms K Dawson (CEO, Greenwich Students' Union)
Mr P Garrod (University Secretary)
Professor J Marie (PVC: Education)
Mr P Taylor (Chief Operating Officer)
Ms L Watson (Chief Financial Officer)
Professor A Westby (Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research & Knowledge Exchange))

Apologies for Absence:

Mr S Saluja
Mr A Sharma
Professor V Lemm (Deputy Vice-Chancellor & Provost)

GB 24/25 DECLARATIONS OF CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

No declarations of conflict of interests were made.

GB 24/26 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING AND ACTION LIST (GB 24/P47)

The minutes of the meeting held on 25 November 2024 were approved. The actions tracker was received.

GB 24/27 SHORT TERM FINANCING OPTIONS (GB 24/P58)


The Chief Financial Officer reported that the Finance Committee had reviewed short term financing options in response to planned capital expenditure in the coming years, related to the Devonport House project, which could put pressure on the University's liquidity KPI target of 84 days. Of the three short term financing options considered, the Securities Backed Lending Facility had been agreed to the best fit to the University's requirements and would not incur a fee. [REDACTED]

The Governing Body agreed that the proposal was prudent and sound, and on the recommendation of the Finance Committee:

- **approved** the University entering into a Securities Backed Lending facility with Barclays against the University's Barclays-managed medium- and long-term investment portfolios.
- **authorised** the Chief Financial Officer (CFO) and University Secretary to complete the form of minutes requested by Barclays (in the information pack) and the Chair to sign them.
- **authorised** the CFO and University Secretary to complete the application form and client security agreement which had been provided in the information pack and appropriate Governors/University officers to sign them.

GB 24/28 VICE-CHANCELLOR'S REPORT (GB 24/P48)

The Governing Body received the regular report from the Vice-Chancellor on recent developments:

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- **Strategy Programme Work:** The halfway point of the 2030 strategy was approaching and a mid-strategy review was planned. The exercise would provide an opportunity to track the impact of the work delivered to date, reflect on the appropriateness of interventions and review the strategic KPIs. The Governing Body would be invited to engage with this work and a series of workshops would be organised.
- **Staff Pulse Survey 2024:** An employee engagement score of 71% had been achieved in the Staff Pulse Survey conducted in November 2024. This was slightly down on both the last full survey and the HEI benchmark. The KPI for Staff Engagement (as measured in staff survey Question, "I would recommend the University as a great place to work") was currently 60% against a 2030 target of 80%. A full analysis of the results had been undertaken and targeted interventions were under way in areas where the results had reduced significantly. The Governing Body supported the plans to address these areas and noted that both University wide and local action plans would be developed.
- **University Achievements:** The University had received the Greener Greenwich Award at the Best of Royal Greenwich Business Awards in recognition of its role in tackling the climate crisis and improving environmental sustainability. In the 2024/25 People & Plant League Table, the University had retained its 1st Class Award and improved one place to 17th out of 149 universities.
- **Office for Students & Government Matters:** A recent WonkHE article on university financial statements had highlighted the financial challenges being experienced across the sector. 15 institutions had posted a deficit and 43 had not yet published their annual accounts. Greenwich was continuing with its programme of cost efficiencies in order to maintain its financial stability.
- **English Devolution White Paper:** The English Devolution White Paper, which had been published on 16 December 2024, set out a new devolution framework which included establishing new strategic authorities. Although not part of the accelerated programme, the local government structure in Kent and Medway would eventually be reorganised. In his capacity as Chief Executive of Medway Council, Mr Hicks reported that the establishment of an elected Mayor could open up opportunities for Greenwich and offered to brief Governors further on the matter.

The Governing Body considered a report on student recruitment in comparison with sector wide trends and competitor behaviour.

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The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research & Knowledge Exchange (R&KE)) presented the annual report on research and knowledge exchange activities during 2023/24.

The R&KE Sub-Strategy had been slightly refocused on deliverables key to developing a supportive environment for growth in R&KE revenues. For 2023/24, seven projects had been progressed. Major achievements had included completion of the new structure of centres and institutes including the launch of the new Institute for Inclusive Communities; the restructuring of Greenwich Research and Innovation to support academic staff achievement; activities to support Early Career Academics' engagement in order to contribute to REF 2029; and approval of the establishment of the Greenwich Doctoral College to improve the postgraduate research student experience.

Current work was concentrating on enhancing the research culture and environment, in preparation for REF 2029 and the acquisition of a new IT system for digital transformation. The new Head of Greenwich Doctoral College was now in post and would be overseeing its formal launch later in the year.

The Governing Body noted performance during 2023/24:

- The University had retained its place in the top 100 in the Times Higher Education Impact Ranking based on the UN Sustainable Development Goals.
- A reduction in revenue and the level of external contracting following a challenging year.
- A 25% increase in bids, with a success rate of just over 30%.
- An increasing trajectory in the level and quality of research outputs, which together with the internal Greenwich REF Assessment Trials, indicated that there would be a strong pool of outputs for REF2029 in support of the strategic KPI for a research power of 2000 by 2030.
- Work undertaken on improving the quality of data behind the Knowledge Exchange Framework would lead to improved funding.
- PGR student numbers were starting to stabilize after a period of decline.

The Governing Body thanked Professor Westby for the informative report and noted with interest the range of research undertaken in the case studies. Governors recognised the importance of winning larger project bids in order to make a difference to the revenue generated from research and to attract high quality researchers for the future.

GB 24/31 STUDENT SUCCESS UPDATE (GB 24/P51)

Professor Jenny Marie, Pro Vice-Chancellor: Education, attended for this item.

The Pro Vice-Chancellor provided a progress update on implementation of the Student Success Sub-Strategy. Grouped into four themes (Foundations, Innovations, Interventions and Enablers), a range of projects such as Curriculum Shape, Greenwich Online and the Greenwich Tutoring Framework were underway. The Greenwich Tutoring Framework was currently being rolled out over a two-year period. Instead of personal tutors, students now had academic tutors and Faculty Student Advisors who provided pastoral support. Despite initial resistance from some staff, the Framework had been positively received by students and the Greenwich Students' Union. The dedicated role of the Faculty Support Advisers was leading to a faster, more efficient and more consistent service to students. The projects categorized as Enablers (the Curriculum Management Tool, the Student Lifecycle Management system and the Student Engagement Dashboard) were concerned with digitalising processes around quality assurance and student engagement.

The Governing Body noted with interest the projects aimed at improving the BAME Awarding Gap. The PVC Education reported that Faculties had different demographics and undertook considerable data analysis on the Awarding Gap. Evaluation was being undertaken to understand these and put targeted interventions into place.

The Governing Body recognised that the Curriculum Shape work would involve a cultural shift across the University. The formal Curriculum Framework was due to be approved by Academic Council at its March 2025 meeting, and a full business case was being finalised. The cultural shift extended to other areas of work such as the Academic Programme Taskforce and the expanding focus on student success metrics. The Vice-Chancellor confirmed that the Taskforce was having a positive impact.

GB 24/32 ACADEMIC QUALITY AND STANDARDS (GB 24/P52)

Professor Jenny Marie, Pro Vice-Chancellor: Education, and Rachel Ashton, Executive Director for Student & Academic Services, attended for this item.

The Governing Body received a presentation which highlighted key elements of assurance on academic quality and standards in support of the annual assurance report from the Academic Council (in the Information Pack).

The presentation outlined what academic quality and standards were and set out how the University ensured that it had a high-quality provision. Indicators included the University's Gold Teaching Excellence Framework rating, the student satisfaction rates in the National Student Survey and Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey, all Office for Students' student outcomes thresholds (Condition B3) being met for all undergraduate and postgraduate taught degree types, robust processes for monitoring quality and standards, positive external examiner feedback and a comparable proportion of good honours degrees awarded year on year.

The Governing Body noted that the University managed academic standards through its programme approval and modification processes, through the external examiner system and the Progression and Award Boards. During the past year, significant improvements had been introduced to the quality assurance process following a One University project undertaken in the summer. The effectiveness of Progression and Award Boards had been further built on, ensuring that all students had a progression decision by the end of the academic year. The Continuous Improvement Tool had been embedded in the annual programme review process providing the means for academics to review the performance of their programmes and put action planning in place.

The Governing Body welcomed the assurance provided through the report from the Academic Council and noted the anticipated benefits from future improvements planned in the coming year.

GB 24/33 GENDER AND WIDER PAY GAPS REPORT (GB 24/P53)

Ms Gail Brindley, Executive Director of People, attended for this item.

The Executive Director of People presented the 2024 Gender and Wider Pay Gaps Report. The report met the legislative requirements for gender pay reporting. The inclusion of the pay gap figures for the protected characteristics of disability, ethnicity and sexual orientation anticipated the government's plan to introduce mandatory reporting on these other pay gaps.

The University's latest data showed a fall in the mean gender pay gap of 0.8% to 8.5%. This was the lowest point since reporting started in 2017. In relation to the other pay gaps, the University had a mean pay gap of 4.2% for disability, of 14% for ethnicity and of 5.7% for sexual orientation.

The Governing Body was told that the figures included students who worked for the University whilst studying ('Job Shop students'), whose inclusion was required, and that this impacted on the statistics. The executive recognised that additional work was needed to reduce the gaps further. An Action Plan had been developed and was included in the report to help the University to continue to work towards the targets of achieving no statistically significant mean gender pay gap and closing the disability, ethnicity and sexual orientation pay gaps by 2030.

The Governing Body commended the University for its ambition to be sector leading with regard to EDI and noted the planned drop-in sessions to brief staff on pay gap reporting.

The Governing Body **approved** the 2023/24 Gender and Wider Pay Gap Report for publication on the Government portal and the University's website.

GB 24/34 HEALTH AND SAFETY ANNUAL REPORT 2023/24 (GB 24/P55)

Vikki Wood, Associate Director, Health & Safety, attended for this item.

The Governing Body considered the annual report on health and safety in 2023/24. Governors were pleased to note that good progress continued to be made in implementing the University's health and safety strategy and embedding a positive health and safety culture. The health and safety structure had moved to a more centralised approach based on a business partnering model. This restructuring would lead to improved KPI performance and help to identify areas of weakness.

The Governing Body was informed that the number of RIDDOR accidents reported to the Health & Safety Executive had increased but no overarching themes had been identified. No external health and safety enforcement actions or improvement notices had been served.

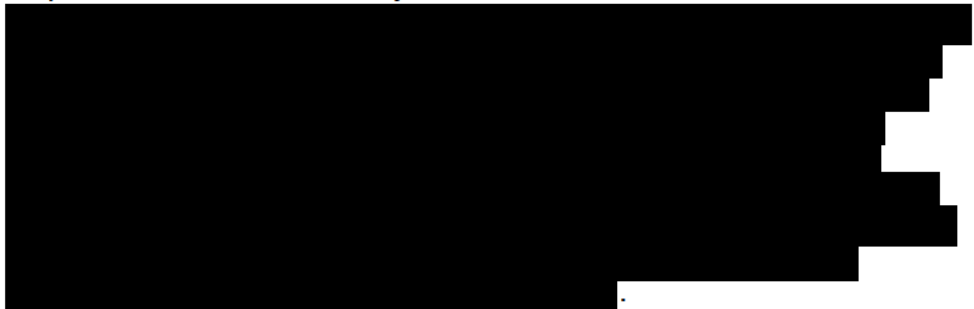
The University Secretary updated the Governing Body on the status of the Daniel Defoe Halls of Residence, the University's only high-rise building. The application to register the building with the new Building Safety Regulator had been submitted. All of the suspect Aluminum Composite Material (ACM) panels had now been removed from the building, significantly reducing the overall risk, and other fire safety improvements were substantially complete.

The Governing Body was reassured by:

- The continuing programme of health and safety audits through the introduction of a new process of annual self-assessments and the active role of the VCE in monitoring areas not meeting the basic assurance threshold.
- The implementation of a new health and safety accident management system which offered improved functionality in reporting and tracking incidents.
- The development of a new travel risk assessment system to manage risks around business travel.
- The high uptake of health and safety training by staff.

In discussion the following points were made:

- The Chair of the Audit & Risk Committee noted that the report had been considered at its January 2025 meeting. There had been some discussion around the accident frequency rate which had risen slightly during the year to 2.9 per 1000 people, above the sector average of 2.84. It had been emphasised that the University aimed for a zero-accident rate.

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- In response to a question about the University's strategic approach to health and safety, it was reported that the in-house process of auditing health and safety was benchmarked against an international standard ISO45001. In addition, the Internal Auditors, KPMG, periodically reviewed health and safety as part of the annual internal audit programme.

The Governing Body thanked Officers for the comprehensive report and welcomed the improvements made to the Daniel Defoe Hall of Residence.

GB 24/35 GOVERNANCE EFFECTIVENESS REVIEW (GB 24/P56)

The Governing Body **considered** the final report of the Governing Body Effectiveness Review by Halpin Partnership incorporating the action plan.

The University Secretary reported that, in accordance with Committee of University Chairs guidance, a triennial effectiveness review of the Governing Body had been conducted by the Halpin Partnership who had carried out the last review in 2022. The review had involved a survey of Governors based on Halpin's Governance Maturity Framework, interviews with selected Governors, Governor focus groups, a desk review and in-person observation of the November 2024 Governing Body meeting.

The University Secretary reported that the findings were very positive with an overall governance rating of "excellent with most areas being at leading edge". This was the same result as the follow-up impact review conducted by Halpin in 2023, indicating that the improvements to governance practices had been sustained and further enhanced. Halpin had confirmed that the University's governance met the requirements of the CUC's Higher Education Code of Governance and the Office for Students.

The action plan had identified 9 recommendations and implementation of these would be monitored by the People & Governance Committee. Governors noted that recommendation R1 on strengthening engagement on academic assurance had included suggestions for increasing communication between the Academic Council and the Governing Body. The consultants had suggested holding an annual joint session, possibly using the themed world café format used previously which all agreed had worked well. It was suggested that Governors could observe a meeting of the Academic Council if they wished and Governors were reminded that the minutes of the Academic Council were routinely shared as part of the Information Pack.

The Governing Body agreed that the review had been valuable and that the recommendations were sensible. The Chair of the People & Governance Committee drew attention to Halpin's opinion that Greenwich stood out as a "leader in best practice" and commended the University Secretary and the Governance Secretariat team for the part they had played in achieving such an excellent outcome.

GB 24/36 HONORARY DEGREES 2025 (GB 24/P57)

The Governing Body **approved** the proposed honorary awards for 2025.

The Governing Body **approved** the following:

- From the Finance Committee held on 3 March 2025:
 - The form of minutes, terms and conditions and security agreement for the Securities Backed Lending Facility (see minute 24/27)
- From Academic Council held on 29 January 2025:
 - Change of name of the Faculty of Liberal Arts and Sciences to the Faculty of Law, Arts and Social Sciences.

The meeting finished at 19:00.

T.A.Brighton
2 March 2025