# Minutes of the 38th Governing Body meeting

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| **Date:** | Tuesday, 13th January 2026 |
| **Time:** | 3.00pm – 6.45pm, via MS Teams |
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| **Chairperson:** | Professor Patrick Prendergast |
| **Attendees:** | Professor Veronica Campbell |
| | Ms Ruth Beadle |
| | Mr Jim Bergin |
| | Ms Eileen Curtis |
| | Dr David Dempsey |
| | Dr Zeta Dooly |
| | Dr Greg Doyle |
| | Ms Trish Finegan |
| | Ms Louise Grubb |
| | Professor Marie-Christine Ho Ba Tho |
| | Mr Richard Lacey |
| | Mr Kevin Lewis |
| | Ms Erin Ní Fhoghlú |
| | Ms Pauline Oakes |
| | Mr Derek Sheridan |
| | Ms Louise Walsh |
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| **Apologies:** | Ms Lucy Kate Bosch |

**In attendance under the Code of Governance:**
Ms Elaine Sheridan, VP Governance /University Secretary

**In attendance for Agenda Item 4.1**
Professor Maria Hinfelaar, Chairperson, Wexford Vision Steering Group

**In attendance for Agenda Item 5:**
Dr Richard Hayes, VP Strategy

**In attendance for Agenda Item 6:**
Dr Richard Hayes, VP Strategy
Dr David Ryan, Associate Vice President Sustainability (6.2a)

**In attendance for Agenda Item 7.4:**
Dr Tom Ward, Institute of Public Administration (IPA)
Ms Alice Kelly, Institute of Public Administration (IPA)

**Secretariat:** Ms Annette Byrne

| Item Title - Section A | |
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| **1.** | **<u>Chairperson's Opening</u>:** |
| *1.1* | <u>Welcome & approval of Agenda</u><br>NOTED The Chairperson welcomed all to the first meeting of 2026. Confirming the meeting was quorate and with approval of the agenda he commenced the normal business. |
| *1.2* | <u>Conflict of Interest</u><br>NOTED The Chairperson asked members if they had any conflicts of interest to declare associated with items on the meeting agenda. The President indicated that she would excuse herself from the meeting for Item 2. No other members present declared a conflict for this meeting. |
| *1.3* | <u>EDI Committee Terms of Reference</u><br>NOTED Ms Beadle outlined minor amendments to the Terms of Reference for the Equality, Diversity & Inclusion committee and sought approval for same.<br><br>AGREED To approve revised Terms of Reference as presented and to publish on the website. |
| *1.4* | <u>Approval of minutes 25th November 2025</u><br>AGREED It was agreed to approve the minutes of 25th November 2025 and to publish on the website. |
| *1.5* | <u>Matters arising (Action Log)</u><br>NOTED The Chairperson indicated that matters as noted on the Action Log are in hand or scheduled for future meetings. There were no other matters arising. |
| **2.** | **<u>President's Annual Review:</u>**<br><br>NOTED The President excused herself from the meeting at 15.07pm. The Chairperson informed the Governing Body that he and Ms Curtis had met with the President in recent weeks for the purpose of the President's Annual Review and noted that the President had completed a Professional Development Submission. The Chairperson outlined a very positive outcome of the performance of the President in terms of providing strong leadership and strategic direction. Ms Curtis highlighted the importance of progressing priority areas such as the academic portfolio and suggested that the appointment of Senior Vice President roles would assist the delivery of priorities and workplan of the President. She commended the President on the vast body of work undertaken as dictated by a very demanding and complex role. Ms Curtis informed the Governing Body that feedback has been provided to the President. The Chairperson then indicated that the review has now been closed and that he would convey the appreciation of the Governing Body to the President.<br><br>The President rejoined the meeting at 15.15pm. |
| **3.** | **<u>Report from President:</u>**<br><br>NOTED The President provided the Governing Body with following updates; |

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| | - Updates in relation to major capital projects including Glassworks; Wexford campus development and Pharmacy & Veterinary facilities, noting that the latter project has moved to tender reviews for a design team;<br>- Announcement by Minister James Lawless TD, during his visit to SETU in December 2025, regarding approval to progress the One Health Building on the Glassworks site, along with the Government commitment to a tertiary campus with WWETB in Wexford;<br>- Meeting with Turnberry, who provide strategic advice with regards to capital development and master planning, on the new campus site in Wexford;<br>- Meetings and activities undertaken by the Wexford Vision Steering Group;<br>- Government approval for the introduction of a Professorship grade for the TU sector;<br>- Appointment of a Chief Financial Officer (pending Governing Body approval) and recruitment process for a Chief Academic Officer currently underway. The President informed the Governing Body that Mr Lewis, as approved to assist this particular selection process, is now no longer available to assist, and therefore sought approval for the appointment of Mr Bergin to the selection panel. The Governing Body granted approval for this request;<br>- Internal and external engagements, events and meetings;<br>- Establishment of steering groups to develop programmes in Optometry and Teacher Education;<br>- Brief update in relation to progress being made by Forvis Mazars regarding the Carlow College due diligence review;<br>- SETU events and success stories in the previous weeks. The President highlighted the recent Family Carers event which was attended by the President of Ireland.<br><br>In concluding, the President extended condolences to the family and friends of an SETU student who had passed away recently following a tragic accident in Carlow.<br><br>The Chairperson thanked the President for her report and opened the floor to comments and advice. As the discussion progressed the Governing Body focused on the matter of Carlow College as raised by the President in her report. It was agreed that there was a requirement for a set of focused principles to address the protection of learners, implications regarding staff matters, use of the physical infrastructure of Carlow College and the avoidance of course duplication. The matter of appropriate indemnities was also raised. It was agreed that a document outlining key principles to inform the next stage of discussion would be considered by the Governing Body at the next meeting.<br><br>The Chairperson thanked all for their input and advice. |
| **4.** | **<u>Interim Report from Wexford Vision Steering Group:</u>** |
| *4.1* | NOTED Professor Maria Hinfelaar, Chair of the Wexford Vision Steering Group was welcomed to the meeting. She provided the Governing Body with an update regarding progress made in relation to recommendations, findings and conclusions as adopted by the Steering Group at their recent meeting noting that a final report is forthcoming. She outlined these recommendations and suggested that this would inform a refresh of the Preliminary Business Case previously submitted to the HEA, strengthen partnerships and develop a clear pathway. Professor Hinfelaar proposed endorsement of the recommendations by the Governing Body in order to progress an implementation plan. The President took the opportunity to express her gratitude to Professor Hinfelaar and the Steering Group members for their tremendous engagement and indicated support for the recommendations presented. The Chairperson then proposed that recommendations as presented are adopted by the Governing Body.<br><br>AGREED To adopt the recommendations of the Wexford Vision Steering Group as presented. The Chairperson thanked Professor Hinfelaar and she left the meeting. |
| *4.2* | NOTED The VP Governance outlined preliminary next steps to be undertaken as included in the report provided which includes continued discussions with WWETB and Wexford Council County. |

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| | The Chairperson thanked all for their work on this matter. |
| **5.** | **<u>Strategic Plan:</u>** |
| *5.1* | <u>Update on Strategic Plan Implementation</u><br>NOTED The VP Strategy was welcomed to the meeting. He provided an overview of actions since the previous update in September 2025 noting that good progress is being made and that eight actions have been completed since the last report. He also indicated that actions remain under control with amended target dates to reflect these changes. The status of the top twelve strategic actions was also provided. |
| *5.2* | <u>Update – Student Numbers/Recruitment</u><br>NOTED In the absence of the VP Academic Affairs, the VP Strategy referred to the key strategic priority in relation to maintaining and growing student numbers and outlined indicative CAO enrolments for the current academic year 2025-26. Current indications suggest an increase of approximately 9% on full-time new entrant enrolments along in an improvement in retention rates and a small decease in part-time student numbers. In summarising, the VP Strategy indicated that further year on year comparison would be provided once student returns are finalised at the end March.<br><br>The Chairperson then opened the floor to comments, feedback and advice. Whilst acknowledging the work completed and ongoing, some concerns were expressed with regards to actions in the Strategic Plan where target dates have been amended and the impact this may have on timelines for actions previously scheduled. It was therefore suggested that it would be helpful to review timelines already set out in order to ensure that all actions will be achieved within the lifespan of the Strategic Plan.<br><br>The Chairperson thanked the VP Strategy for his updates and the meeting then took a short recess. |
| **6.** | **<u>Strategic Discussion on Change & Enhancement:</u>** |
| *6.1* | <u>Update on ROaD Project</u><br>NOTED The VP Strategy was welcomed back to the meeting. He outlined the structure of the Realising Opportunities and Development (ROaD) Project which integrates a number of strategic plan actions into one programme of work. These include; a review of the academic portfolio to meet the needs of the region, the development of an enhanced workload allocation model to reflect better the work of staff and a workforce development plan that provides a more strategic approach to workforce planning. He presented detail of the progress made to date and current status, noting the workplan and process of review being undertaken in terms of the academic portfolio. The Governing Body indicated their support for the project and inquired whether additional bodies of work would be undertaken in this manner once this project has been completed. The President clarified that the current plan is to continue as outlined and she noted that the approach being developed would become integrated into SETU's routine resourcing and academic planning. |
| *6.2* | <u>TSAF update and TEF submission</u><br>NOTED The Associate VP Sustainability joined the meeting. He firstly outlined details of the TSAF (Technological Sector Advancement Fund), timelines and objectives associated with the funding. A full overview of the status of actions associated with all work packages was provided noting the status of all actions including those complete and those not yet commenced. The Associate VP Sustainability confirmed that the HEA is fully informed of progress made and project status. He then outlined details of the duration, funding and co-funding related to the University's proportion of TEF (Targeted Enhancement Fund) allocations, along with the project objectives and work packages. |
| *6.3* | <u>TEF Sectoral Submission</u><br>NOTED The VP Strategy outlined details of the TEF (Targeted Enhancement Fund) sectoral submission as supported by the HEA. He provided details of the overall objective and noted work packages, partners and funding allocations as provided under this particular fund which SETU will focus on Business Intelligence and AI-Enabled Analytics. |

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| | The Chairperson commended the executive and leadership in securing a large portion of the overall allocation of TEF funding. He thanked both for their presentations and updates and they left the meeting. |
| **7.** | **<u>Governance Matters:</u>** |
| *7.1* | <u>HEA Oversight Agreement 2026</u><br>NOTED The VP Governance explained the purpose of the HEA Oversight Agreement, the key responsibilities both the HEA and SETU respectively in ensuring good governance and accountability practices are in place.<br><br>AGREED To note the contents of and approve the HEA Oversight Agreement 2026 as presented. |
| *7.2* | <u>Approval for SEAL - Deed of Novation</u><br>NOTED The VP Governance outlined the request for approval for the use of the SEAL on a Deed of Novation pertaining to an agreement with an external company regarding the development of an Optometry programme at SETU. The particulars of this agreement were also outlined and it was noted that a full legal review of the novation agreement has been undertaken. The Governing Body expressed some concern regarding this matter and suggested that the matter is referred to the Finance & Capital Investment Committee for review. |
| *7.3* | <u>Approval for SEAL – Deed of Renunciation</u><br>NOTED The VP Governance outlined the request for approval for the use of the SEAL on a Deed of Renunciation relating to premises owned by the University. The particulars of the letting agreement were reviewed and approved by the Governing Body in December 2024. The Governing Body expressed concern and requested that this matter is also referred to the Finance & Capital Investment Committee for their consideration prior to a decision.<br><br>ACTION Progress a review of both matters above to the Finance & Capital Investment Committee and pending review of same to be resubmitted to the Governing Body for approval for use of the Seal as applicable. |
| *7.4* | <u>External Effectiveness Review - Finding/Recommendations</u><br>NOTED Dr Ward and Ms Kelly joined the meeting. Dr Ward commenced by thanking all for their engagement and input into surveys during the course of the Effectiveness Review. He then provided a summary of key findings and observations, scope for further development and potential enhancement and in doing so set out a number of recommendations for consideration by the Governing Body and its Committees.<br><br>AGREED It was agreed that the report would be shared with each individual committee for the purpose of developing a work plan and set of actions to implement recommendations. The Chairperson thanked Dr Ward an Ms Kelly and they left the meeting.<br><br>ACTION Distribute report and recommendations to all committees of the Governing Body. |
| **8.** | **<u>Academic Council:</u>**<br><br>NOTED Academic Council minutes 18th November 2025, noting that a self-assessment review of the Academic Council is to be scheduled for the next Governing Body meeting. |
| **9.** | **<u>Minutes of GB Committees:</u>**<br><br>NOTED EDI Committee minutes of 6th and 26th November 2025. Ms Beadle outlined areas of focus for the committee for 2026 and also referred to a number of new policies being progressed. |

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| **10.** | **AOB:**<br><br>NOTED Ms Finegan referenced the recent increase applied to stipend payments for Post Graduate research students and requested that a review of implementation date might be to referred to the Finance & Capital Investment Committee for consideration. This was agreed.<br><br>There were no other matters that required attention. |
| | **SECTION B:** |
| **B1.** | AGREED To approve the appointment of Ms Aisling O'Beirne to the role of Chief Financial Officer. |
| **B2.** | AGREED To approve the appointment of Ms Kathryn Kiely to the board of directors of Insurtech DAC. |
| **B3.** | NOTED Draft Minutes for SETU DAC & Subsidiary companies. |
| **B4.** | NOTED The Governing Body was reminded of their obligation to return Ethics in Public Office Acts 1995 and 2001 declarations on or before the submission deadline of 31st January 2026.<br><br>There being no other matters to attend to the Chairperson apologised for the overrun, thanked all and closed the meeting at 18.40pm. |

**Approved:** ______________________ **Date:** 17th February 2026