

Minutes of the 42nd Governing Body meeting

Date: Tuesday, 16th June 2026
Time: 3.00pm, Room W104, Summerhill Road Campus, Wexford

Chairperson: Professor Patrick Prendergast

Attendees: Professor Veronica Campbell
Mr Jim Bergin, Deputy Chairperson
Ms Lucy Kate Bosch (via MS Teams)
Ms Eileen Curtis
Dr David Dempsey
Dr Zeta Dooly (via MS Teams)
Dr Greg Doyle
Ms Trish Finegan
Ms Louise Grubb
Mr Richard Lacey
Mr Kevin Lewis
Professor Hannah McGee
Ms Erin Ní Fhoghlú (via MS Teams)
Ms Pauline Oakes
Ms Louise Walsh

Apologies: Ms Ruth Beadle
Professor Marie-Christine Ho Ba Tho
Mr Derek Sheridan

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

In attendance by invitation of the Governing Body:
Ms Aisling O'Beirne, Chief Financial Officer

In attendance for Agenda Item 3:
Mr David Denieffe, Chief Operations Officer
Dr Richard Hayes, VP Strategy
Mr Keith Williams, Director of Capital Projects

In attendance for Agenda Item 4:
Dr Richard Hayes, VP Strategy

In attendance for Agenda Item 5:
Professor Marie-Claire Van Hout, VP Research, Innovation & Impact

In attendance for Agenda Item 6:
Mr David Denieffe, Chief Operations Officer
Dr Hazel Farrell, Academic Lead for GenAI (via MS Teams)
Mr Thomas Ahearne, Operations Lead for GenAI (via MS Teams)

In attendance for Agenda Item 7:

Mr David Denieffe, Chief Operations Officer
Ms Shauna Whyte, VP People, Culture & EDI

Secretariat: Ms Annette Byrne

Item Title - Section A	
1.	<u>Chairperson's Opening:</u> 1.1 <u>Welcome & approval of Agenda</u> NOTED The Chairperson welcomed all to the meeting. Confirming the meeting was quorate and with approval of the agenda the Chairperson commenced the normal business. 1.2 <u>Conflict of Interest</u> NOTED The Chairperson asked members if they had any conflicts of interest to declare associated with items on the meeting agenda. Mr Bergin indicated that he would absent himself from the meeting for Item A1.4. No other members declared a conflict for this meeting. 1.3 <u>Approval of minutes 12th May 2026</u> AGREED Subject to a minor amendment it was agreed to approve the minutes of 12th May 2026 and to publish on the website. 1.4 <u>Membership – People, Culture & Equality Committee</u> AGREED Mr Bergin absented himself from the meeting. It was then agreed to approve the following appointments to the People, Culture & Equality Committee; • Ms Ruth Beadle • Mr Jim Bergin • Dr Tom O'Toole • Dr Paula Rankin. Mr Bergin rejoined the meeting. 1.5 <u>Matters arising (Action Log)</u> NOTED The Chairperson indicated that matters recorded in the Action Log are in hand and scheduled before the end of the academic year. No additional matters arose.
2.	<u>Report from President:</u> 2.1 NOTED The President opened by informing the Governing Body that the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between SETU and Carlow College has been formally signed and as anticipated that work has commenced to put in place the necessary legal agreements. The President further advised that, subject to progress and to obtain the necessary approvals, it may be required to convene a meeting of the Governing Body during the summer period. In this context, reference was made to the provisions within the Standing Orders that provide for such circumstances. AGREED The Governing Body noted and agreed to the proposed course of action outlined. The President acknowledged, with regret, the recent untimely passing of Executive Team member, Professor John Wells. The President drew attention to the updates and items set out in her report for the May–June period, including recent funding awards, the presentation of the Michael Cooley Award to former President of Ireland Michael D. Higgins, and a range of other SETU success stories and achievements.

2.2 **President's workplan for academic year 2025/26:**

NOTED The President continued by providing updates in relation to her annual Workplan for 2025/26 as follows;

- Strategic matters - progress was noted across completed, in-progress, and ongoing strategic initiatives, including the approval of key strategies now in place, with update reports to be presented on an annual basis;
- Programme approvals - required assurance process or accreditation from the relevant professional bodies for the Veterinary and Pharmacy programmes have been secured, ensuring readiness for student intake in September 2026;
- New degree programmes – Expressions of Interest have been submitted to the HEA, with further development work progressing in relation to proposed programmes in Physiotherapy, Dietetics, Social Work, and Social Care.
- Updates in relation to the progress of capital projects and associated timelines;
- National Student Accommodation Strategy published recently with an updated accommodation strategy for SETU to be brought to the Governing Body during the new academic year;
- Activity and initiatives funded under the HEA Targeted Enhancement Fund, including the establishment of an Advancement and Alumni Office;
- Completed and ongoing internal and external stakeholder engagement activities;
- Other priorities - progress on a range of additional priorities for 2025/26, both completed and in progress, including Technological University (TU) Professor recruitment, developments towards unified systems, and a continued focus on financial sustainability, student numbers and retention, and cost management;
- Sectoral and Global engagement - noted that the President will assume the role of Chair of the Technological Universities Association (TUA) from July 2026 and that she is also currently serving as Vice Chair of the EU-Conexus Governing Board and is due to assume the role as Chair in Q4 2026.

The President acknowledged the support and work of the Executive Management Team in delivering the above and also thanked the Governing Body for their oversight and support. The Chairperson thanked the President for her updates, commending the significant work and milestones achieved during the academic year. The Governing Body concurred with the sentiments expressed by the Chairperson and also complimented the President on her external roles, acknowledging her leadership at both sectoral and international levels.

3. **Wexford Campus Development (Preliminary Business Case):**

NOTED Mr Denieffe, Dr Hayes, and Mr Williams were welcomed to the meeting. The President opened by noting that elements of the preliminary business case remain under development. She then provided a recap of the process undertaken since July 2024, highlighting the identified opportunity for a tertiary campus, the findings of the Wexford Vision Group report, and subsequent engagements with WWETB. This includes the establishment of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to support and advance progress on this initiative. The President advised that the revised business case has been aligned with relevant national strategies and policies, noting in particular the imminent publication of a National Tertiary Strategy. The President continued by outlining the focus of a tertiary campus, including the development of new programmes, collaborative thematic areas, research opportunities, and the key objectives underpinning the establishment of a new tertiary campus. In support of Phase 1 development, an analysis of options was outlined. It was noted that these scenarios are subject to financial evaluation through a Multi-Criteria Analysis and Cost-Benefit Analysis, to be undertaken by Indecon. In concluding her presentation, the President outlined the advantages of a single, unified tertiary campus and the next steps required to progress the matter through the necessary approval and governance processes. These steps include continued engagement with WWETB, a meeting with DFHERIS scheduled for early July, ongoing legal considerations, and the development of a communications plan in relation to the initiative.

	The Chairperson thanked the President for her presentation and opened the floor for comments and questions. A discussion followed, during which the Governing Body expressed its support for progressing the matter to ensure the University's vision is realised. The Governing Body also commended the ambition as set out in the targets outlined in the preliminary business case. The Chairperson thanked members for their constructive comments and valuable discussion. Mr Denieffe and Mr Williams then left the meeting, and Dr Hayes remained for the next agenda item.
4.	<u>Strategic Plan Implementation – Update:</u> NOTED Dr Hayes presented an update on the progress of actions since March 2026, noting that an additional five actions have been completed and that the majority of actions remain on track. He reported that the top twelve strategic actions remain stable; however, he highlighted a change in the status of PhD and Professional Doctoral enrolments to reflect slower progress than anticipated. Dr Hayes advised the Governing Body that this matter is being further investigated and closely monitored with actions being taken to improve performance. The Governing Body sought an update on current visibility regarding student applications for the forthcoming academic year intake and an approximate increase of 12% in first-preference Level 8 applications was noted in regard to this. The Chief Financial Officer highlighted that careful consideration is being given to budget requests and allocations to ensure cost control and support financial stabilisation in advance of the expiry of specific funding sources. The Chairperson thanked the VP Strategy for his update and he left the meeting.
5.	<u>Research Strategy - Implementation Update:</u> NOTED The Vice President for Research, Innovation and Impact was welcomed to the meeting to present an annual progress update on the implementation of the Research, Innovation and Impact Strategy. She advised the Governing Body that the University is in a strong position with regard to embedding and integrating research within the region. She continued by providing details of the University's performance in funding applications and conversion rates, noting an 8% increase in the period from September 2024 to April 2026, somewhat driven by applying a strategic focus on higher-value applications. Further information outlined research collaborations, sectoral comparisons in terms of research funding awarded, and recent major grant success stories, including a €1 million award to the Walton Institute to fund a national AI and high-performance computing platform. The Vice President for Research, Innovation and Impact provided details of industry partners in the region supporting PhD scholarships and postdoctoral researchers. She also outlined the University's performance within the sector in relation to Knowledge Transfer agreements, invention disclosures, and licence options and assignments. Finally, she highlighted ongoing efforts to encourage and develop the research culture and environment, with a focus on making it as flexible as possible to enable staff engagement in research. The Chairperson thanked the Vice President for Research, Innovation and Impact for her presentation and invited comments and questions from the floor. Further clarification was provided regarding challenges associated with academic contracts for staff seeking to engage in research activities and trends in PhD enrolments. The Vice President for Research, Innovation and Impact then left the meeting. The Chairperson expressed concern in relation to the format of presentation of some of the metrics and benchmarks included in the presentation. The President noted that increased focus is being placed on the annual tracking of comparative statistics to better inform assessment of research impact and performance. The meeting adjourned briefly at this point. The Chairperson excused himself and requested that the Deputy Chairperson assume the role of Chairperson for the remainder of the meeting.

6.	<u>Gen AI - Risks & Opportunities:</u> NOTED Mr Denieffe was welcomed back to the meeting. Dr Farrell and Mr Aherne joined the meeting remotely. Dr Farrell commenced by outlining the process being undertaken to ensure a coordinated and collaborative approach, with the aim of establishing a clear governance structure and framework for the ethical and transparent use of AI. She outlined a suite of core documentation in development, emphasising that these will function as living documents to enable responsiveness and adaptability within a rapidly evolving technological landscape. She also highlighted the development of a framework designed to embed AI practices across the University and build confidence, literacy and fluency in supporting future-focused approaches to AI. Mr Aherne outlined the approach being taken to embed AI operationally across the University. He highlighted how AI may be used to enhance work practices, the development of policy frameworks and training programmes, and ensuring that the University is well placed to manage the risks and opportunities arising from the use of AI. Details of the AI Risk Register and AI Opportunities Register were also shared with the Governing Body. The Deputy Chairperson thanked the presenters for their contributions and opened the floor for comments. A discussion ensued, during which the Governing Body commended the work undertaken in this area, noting that it provided reassurance that the University has taken a leading role in addressing the opportunities and risks associated with AI. Dr Farrell and Mr Aherne then left the meeting. Mr Denieffe remained in attendance.
7.	<u>Culture Review & Development:</u> NOTED The VP for People, Culture and EDI joined the meeting and presented the findings of the University's three-year Culture Development Programme. She advised that this work remains ongoing and is focused on identifying the fundamental building blocks required to support and sustain cultural change across the University. The programme seeks to establish a clear understanding of the foundations of the University's culture, how these are experienced by staff and stakeholders, and the measures that can be taken to strengthen and embed a positive culture throughout the university. Ms Whyte noted that the findings will inform future initiatives aimed at fostering an inclusive, supportive and values-driven organisational culture across the University. In outlining the project deliverables, Ms Whyte provided an overview of the various phases of the Culture Development Programme, including the associated timelines and budget allocations that have been put in place to support its implementation. She described the development journey and the planned progression of activities aimed at advancing culture change across the University. It was noted that the current phase of the programme does not specifically focus on the student experience. Ms Whyte advised, however, that it is intended that students and other key stakeholders will be actively included during the subsequent phases of development to ensure their perspectives inform the ongoing evolution of the programme and the wider culture change agenda. The Deputy Chairperson invited comments and observations from members. During the discussion that followed, members emphasised the importance of ensuring that the significant body of work already undertaken through the University's Change Management process is appropriately aligned with, and built upon, the Culture Development Programme. The Deputy Chairperson thanked Ms Whyte for her presentation. Following the conclusion of the discussion, Ms Whyte and Mr Denieffe withdrew from the meeting.
8.	<u>Governance Matters:</u> <u>Policy Approvals</u> NOTED The Deputy Chairperson outlined the review and recommendation for approval as set out by the Policy Committee in respect of the policies listed below. AGREED Subject to the clarifications to be provided, it was agreed to approve the following policies and to arrange for their publication on the University website: • CCTV Policy; • Dignity & Respect for Students Policy;

	• Foreign Currency Policy; • Programme Development & Validation Policy; • Recruitment & Selection Policy; • Student Athlete Support Policy; • Student Complaints Policy.
9.	<u>Students Union:</u> NOTED The President of the Students' Union (SU), Ms Ní Fhoghlú, delivered a presentation on the activities and initiatives undertaken by SETU Students' Union during Semester 2 of the 2025/2026 academic year. The presentation highlighted a range of events and campaigns conducted throughout the semester, including the International Party, FIFA Tournament, Wexford Bike Racks initiative, Upskill Week, Raise and Give Week, Comhairle Náisiúnta Carlow, and activities marking International Women's Day. Ms Ní Fhoghlú also provided an update on the SETUSU Elections, advising members of her successful re-election as Students' Union President for the 2026/2027 academic year. In addition, Ms Ní Fhoghlú outlined proposals relating to constitutional reform within the Students' Union. She noted that additional resources and increased financial support would be required to effectively support the operation and future development of the Students' Union. The Deputy Chairperson and Governing Body commended Ms Ní Fhoghlú and SU team on the work and support provided to students during the year and also on her re-election as SU President.
10.	<u>Academic Council:</u> NOTED Academic Council minutes of 21 April and 19 May 2026. The President drew attention to the European approach to programme validation in respect of the multi-partner Joint Master's in Leadership for Sustainable Urban and Coastal Development, as part of EU Conexus, for which SETU is the lead partner for the new Masters programme.
11.	<u>Minutes of GB Committees:</u> 11.1 NOTED Audit & Risk Committee draft minutes of 10 June 2026. 11.2 NOTED Commercialisation Committee draft minutes of 18 May 2026. The draft minutes were noted, including that a thorough review of a spin-out proposal has been undertaken. It was further noted that a shareholders' agreement in respect of the proposal is anticipated and will be progressed through the appropriate approval processes in due course. 11.3 NOTED Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Committee minutes of 15 April 2026. 11.4 NOTED Finance & Capital Investment Committee draft minutes of 28 May 2026. 11.5 NOTED Joint Quality Committee draft minutes of 26 May 2026. 11.6 NOTED Policy Committee draft minutes of 11 June 2026.
	<u>SECTION B:</u> B1. <u>Staff Appointments</u> AGREED To approve Dr Laurence Fitzhenry to the post of Head of Faculty of Science & Computing on a permanent basis. B2. NOTED MOU re. CCSP and SETU provided for information purposes.

B3.	NOTED Training material in relation to a recent Governance refresher training session.
B4.	NOTED Update report from the IT Executive Committee. It was further noted that a detailed update and discussion on the matters contained therein had taken place at the most recent meeting of the Audit & Risk Committee.
B5.	AGREED To approve the Charities Regulator Annual Return 2025 and to submit same as required by 30 June 2026.
B6.	AGREED To approve AGM Resolutions for SETU Subsidiaries as presented on the recommendation of the Finance & Capital Investment Committee.
B7.	NOTED Annual Reports to the Governing Body 2025-26 for all committees of the Governing Body.
B8.	NOTED SETU Annual Report 2025/26.
B9.	NOTED Draft minutes for SETU Subsidiaries.
B10.	NOTED Correspondence received from the Charities Regulator noting that the same correspondence has been brought to the attention of the Audit & Risk Committee
B11.	NOTED Provisional dates for GB meetings for the academic year 2026/27, to be entered in all calendars as appropriate.
12.	<u>AOB:</u> NOTED The Deputy Chairperson thanked all members for their contributions and support throughout the academic year. Acknowledging that this was her final meeting of the Governing Body, he thanked Ms Finegan for her energetic, constructive and valued contribution to the work of the Governing Body during her tenure. The Deputy Chairperson also expressed his appreciation to the staff of the Wexford campus for hosting the meeting and for the arrangements made to facilitate its successful conduct. There being no further business, the Deputy Chairperson thanked all those present and formally closed the meeting at 18.23pm.

Approved: _____



Date: **22nd September 2026**