Minutes of the 36th Governing Body meeting

Date:	Tuesday, 21st October 2025
Time:	3.00pm – 6.30pm, Haughton Building Boardroom, Kilkenny Road, Carlow
Chairperson:	Professor Patrick Prendergast
Attendees:	Professor Veronica Campbell Ms Ruth Beadle Mr Jim Bergin (via MS Teams) 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 (via MS Teams) Professor Marie-Christine Ho Ba Tho (via MS Teams) Mr Richard Lacey Mr Kevin Lewis Ms Pauline Oakes (via MS Teams) Mr Derek Sheridan Ms Louise Walsh
Apologies:	Ms Erin Ní Fhoghlú

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

In attendance for Agenda Item 4.1:
Dr David Ryan, Associate VP Sustainability
Mr Cormac O'Toole, VP Finance/Financial Controller

In attendance for Agenda Item 4.2:
Ms Kathryn Kiely, VP External Affairs

In attendance for Agenda Item 5:
Ms Shauna Whyte, VP People, Culture & EDI

In attendance for Agenda Item 7:
Mr Cormac O'Toole, VP Finance/Financial Controller

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 and confirming the meeting was quorate and with approval of the agenda he commenced the normal business. Apologies submitted for this meeting were noted.
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. No members present declared a conflict for this meeting.
1.3	<u>Approval of minutes 23rd September 2025</u> AGREED It was agreed to approve the minutes of 23rd September 2025 and to publish on the website.
1.4	<u>Terms of Reference – GB Committees</u> AGREED To approve the revised Terms of Reference for the Audit & Risk Committee as presented and to upload to the website. AGREED To approve the revised Terms of Reference for the Finance & Capital Investments Committee as presented and to upload to the website.
1.5	<u>Committee Membership – Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Committee</u> NOTED Ms Beadle outlined that there was a significant level of response to the call for Expressions of Interest for membership to the above committee and that following a review of the responses that the candidates below are proposed for appointment; • Dr Sarah Sartori; • Dr Isaac Alshaikh. AGREED To approve the appointment of the proposed candidates to the Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Committee.
1.6	<u>Attendance at Finance & Capital Investments Committee meetings</u> AGREED To grant approval for the Chief Operations Officer to attend meetings of the Finance and Capital Investment Committee.
1.7	<u>Matters arising (Action Log)</u> NOTED The clarification provided via electronic communication in relation to a staff appointment deferred at the previous meeting and the subsequent approval by Governing Body for the staff appointment via electronic communication. NOTED The Chairperson indicated that other matters as noted on the Action Log are in hand.
2.	**<u>Report from President:</u>** NOTED The President provided the Governing Body with following updates; • Approval of Master of Pharmacy (MPharm) programme by the Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland (PSI); • Establishment of Wexford Campus Vision group noting a recent meeting of the group with staff of the Wexford Campus to support the development of a revised business case; • Updates in relation to all Capital projects including approval of capital funding for Veterinary and attendance at the Joint Oireachtas Committee meeting regarding Student Accommodation;

	• Progression of interview process in relation to recruitment of senior roles; • Internal and external engagement events and meetings; • Implications of Budget 2026 for the education sector noting key items indicating that additional information would be provided to the Finance & Capital Investments Committee in due course; • Update in relation to meetings with Carlow College (St. Patrick's) and Minister of State Murnane O'Connor; • Events and success stories throughout September and October to date. The Chairperson thanked the President for her report and opened the floor to comments and advice. A discussion ensued in relation to Carlow College and it was noted that an interim report on the matter is due from Mazars which should be available for consideration at the next meeting of the Governing Body.
3.	**Discussion Paper re Artificial Intelligence (Gen AI):** NOTED The President firstly acknowledged those who contributed to the preparation of the report on Artificial Intelligence. In referring to the published "Guidelines for the Responsible Use of AI in the Public Service", the President continued by providing an overview of current activities, challenges and opportunities for the potential use of AI in SETU. The President outlined that via the establishment of a Gen AI Steering Group, developments to date include student and staff guidelines, resources and online courses regarding the use of AI and surveys to inform training needs. This has also been supported through the release of a GenAI Position Statement outlining the core principles for responsible use of AI. Further work in this area is ongoing and includes a GenAI presence on the website, GenAI Risk Register, testing of AI tools and plans for a webinar to reinforce awareness and promote good practice across disciplines. A discussion on the matter ensued and the Governing Body offered their thoughts and views regarding risks and opportunities presented by GenAI. The Chairperson thanked all for their input. ACTION A risks and opportunities register to be prepared and presented at a future Governing body meeting.
4. *4.1* *4.2*	**Strategic Discussion:** Sustainability Strategy (including Financial Plan): NOTED Dr Ryan and Mr O'Toole were welcomed to the meeting. Dr Ryan commenced by introducing a revised strategy over a five year period in order to address feedback provided by the Governing Body at a previous meeting. He then outlined four key priorities that have been identified for action during this period noting that these have been driven by targets outlined in the Strategic Plan and also by legislative targets to 2030 regarding emissions. Dr Ryan also provided a financial plan and funding sources to support delivery of the key priorities. The Chairperson thanked Dr Ryan for his presentation and opened the floor to the Governing Body for comment and advice. A discussion ensued and further clarifications were provided. Dr Ryan and Mr O'Toole then left the meeting. Further discussion continued. The Chairperson then proposed that the Sustainability Strategy be approved as presented noting that the plan will be reviewed both next year and at the strategy mid-point with scope for more stretch targets at that stage. This was accepted by all. AGREED To approve the Sustainability Strategy as presented. Draft External Engagement Plan: NOTED Ms Kiely was welcomed to the meeting. She commenced by providing an overview of the development of the plan to date, outlining the diversity of regional engagement and key areas of priority framed under engagement pillars that will provide a focus over the lifetime of the plan. In addressing each objective set out, Ms Kiely highlighted alignment with regional partnerships and various strategies across the university noting that each action has an assigned owner with targeted timelines for implementation. Ms Kiely thanked the Governing Body for the opportunity to present the draft plan and indicated that the next steps in the evolving plan would include specifying KPIs and the development of financial costings and investment required for implementation. The floor was then opened to the Governing Body for feedback and advice. The Governing Body gave recognition to already established strategies but in doing so suggested that

	the presented list of activities should be elevated to a more strategic approach with a focus on value-add and transformation. It was also requested that, in order to ensure inclusion for all in the South East region, the role of SETU in the community should be expanded further in respect of social benefits for society . The Chairperson thanked Ms Kiely for her presentation and suggested that this matter would be revisited at another point in the near future. Ms Kiely left the meeting at this point. ACTION External Engagement Plan to be presented at the next meeting for final approval.
5.	**<u>HR Annual Report to Governing Body:</u>** NOTED Ms Whyte was welcomed to the meeting to present the HR Annual Report, and in doing so presented statistical information regarding employee numbers by staff category and gender, the number of new starters and leavers per staff category, a full breakdown of employee absences and recruitment statistics, noting that recruitment timelines have improved significantly and indicated that further analysis would be provided in due course in line with the development of the HR Information System. Ms Whyte provided further detail in terms of the introduction of a Learning and Development platform, HR team restructuring, workforce planning and ongoing work in relation to building a values driven culture throughout the university. The Governing Body commended Ms Whyte and the team on progress that has been made. In concurring with sentiments expressed, the Chairperson thanked Ms Whyte for the very informative data provided in her report. Ms Whyte then left the meeting. ACTION Culture audit to be progressed and presented for discussion at a future Governing Body meeting.
6. *6.1* *6.2*	**<u>Governance Matters:</u>** <u>Policy Approvals (Leave Management Policy):</u> NOTED The VP Governance provided an update in relation to the query regarding Jury Service leave sought at the previous, noting a minor change to the wording on this particular matter. AGREED To approve the updated Leave Management Policy as presented. NOTED Mr Sheridan referred to the matter of Assault Leave, noting that this is a national matter currently under review, however requested that in the absence of a national agreement, consideration would be given to the provision of a local interim inclusion that covers all staff categories. <u>Trustee changes – Charities Regulator</u> NOTED The VP Governance updated all in relation to legal advice sought on foot of the Charities (Amendment) Act 2024. The advice outlines that all members of the Governing Body should be registered as trustees with the Charities Regulator, the change relates to internal staff and student Governing Body members only and therefore it was requested that these members provide the details required in order to enable the Governance section update the Charities Register. It was also noted that all other Governing Body members remain listed as trustees on the Charities Register.
7.	**<u>Annual Financial Statements to year 31 Aug 2024:</u>** NOTED Mr O'Toole was welcomed back to the meeting. He informed the Governing Body that draft Annual Financial Statements for year ended 31 August 2024 have received final sign off by the Comptroller & Auditor General and the audit is now complete, noting minor adjustments to the draft statements presented in February 2025. In requesting final approval for signing and submission of same, Mr O'Toole informed all that governance processes have been completed and recommended for approval by the Finance & Capital Investment and Audit & Risk Committees. AGREED On the recommendations of the Finance & Capital Investments Committee and Audit & Risk Committee, to grant the approval of the Governing Body to sign and submit the Annual Financial Statements to the Office of the Comptroller & Auditor General.

Mr O'Toole left the meeting.

8. **Academic Council:**

NOTED Academic Council minutes 16th September 2025.

9. **Minutes of GB Committees:**

9.1 NOTED Audit & Risk Committee draft minutes of 7th October 2025, acknowledging that the committee met with the Office of the Comptroller & Auditor General (OCAG) representatives and the agreement of procedures for engagement with the OCAG.

9.2 NOTED Finance & Capital Investments Committee draft minutes of 30th September 2025, noting agreement for the establishment of an Investment committee.

10. **AOB:**

NOTED Ms Bosch drew attention to the following matters;

- Organised national Student Walk-Out protests scheduled for Wednesday October 22nd in relation to student accommodation, student fees, a borrowing framework for the TU sector and other matters affecting the sector. The President welcomed student voices and support regarding these matters;
- Students' concerns in relation to the ongoing Palestine conflict. The matter was discussed noting previous discussions that have taken place at the Governing Body and re-iterated that the Governing Body continues to support and uphold the views of the university as provided in the public statement issued in May 2024.

NOTED The VP Governance informed the Governing Body that as part of the Effectiveness Review, a representative of the IPA would be in attendance as an observer at the Governing Body meeting on November 25th.

SECTION B:

B1. Climate Action Roadmap
AGREED To approve the above as presented.

B2. NOTED Research Committee Annual Report.

B3. NOTED Draft Minutes re. SETU DAC & Subsidiary companies.

There being no other matters to attend to, the Chairperson apologised for the overrun, thanked all and closed the meeting at 18.30pm.

Approved: ________________________ **Date:** 25th November 2025