Minutes of the 43rd Governing Body meeting

Date: Tuesday, 22nd September 2026
Time: 3.00pm, NetLabs Boardroom, West Campus, Carriganore, Waterford

Chairperson: Professor Patrick Prendergast

Attendees:
Professor Veronica Campbell
Ms Ruth Beadle (via MS Teams)
Mr Jim Bergin, Deputy Chairperson
Ms Eileen Curtis
Dr David Dempsey
Dr Zeta Dooly
Dr Greg Doyle
Ms Louise Grubb
Professor Marie-Christine Ho Ba Tho (via MS Teams)
Mr Richard Lacey
Mr Kevin Lewis (via MS Teams)
Ms Erin Ní Fhoghlú
Ms Hannah Polson
Mr Samanyu Raina (via MS Teams)
Mr Derek Sheridan (via MS Teams)
Ms Louise Walsh

Apologies:
Professor Hannah McGee
Ms Pauline Oakes

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:
Dr Richard Hayes, VP Strategy

In attendance for Agenda Item 3:
Mr Cormac O'Toole, VP Finance/Financial Controller
Mr Brian Setnson, Accounting & Financial Reporting Manager

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. No members declared a conflict for this meeting.
1.3	<u>Nominations - Student Nominees 26/27</u> NOTED The Chairperson advised that the Nominations Committee had met immediately prior to the Governing Body meeting to consider the nominees proposed by the Students' Union, in accordance with the regulations approved by the Minister. The following nominees were recommended for approval: • Ms Erin Ní Fhoghlú; • Ms Hannah Polson; • Mr Samanyu Raina. The Chairperson highlighted that, subject to approval of the nominations, the gender balance of the Governing Body would be brought into line with the applicable requirements. AGREED The Governing Body approved the appointment of Ms Ní Fhoghlú, Ms Polson and Mr Raina and they were then invited them to join the meeting. The Chairperson welcomed Ms Ní Fhoghlú and Ms Polson, inviting Ms Polson to provide a brief introduction. It was noted that Mr Raina would join the meeting at a later stage. NOTED The Chairperson informed the Governing Body that he had been invited by the Welsh Government Minister for Skills and Tertiary Education to chair a panel established to review tertiary education in Wales. He advised that he would declare, as appropriate, any potential or perceived conflicts of interest should they arise between this appointment and his role as Chairperson of the SETU Governing Body. The President congratulated the Chairperson on his appointment, noting that it reflected positively on both the Chairperson and the University.
1.4	<u>Code of Conduct for GB members</u> AGREED To agree and adopt the Code of Conduct for the Governing Body as presented, noting that no changes have been made to the previous iteration of the document.
1.5	<u>Governing Body Standing Orders</u> AGREED To agree and adopt the revised Governing Body Standing Orders as presented and to update the University website accordingly.
1.6	<u>Approval of minutes 16th June & 24th August 2026</u> AGREED It was agreed to approve the above minutes and to publish on the website. NOTED The President provided updates to matters noted in the minutes above as follows; • Following the formal request from the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science for the due diligence report on Carlow College commissioned by

	SETU, the President advised that redacted versions of the report, reviewed by both SETU and Carlow College, together with the minutes of all meetings held between SETU and Carlow College during the period 2024–2026, had been forwarded to the Joint Oireachtas Committee; • An in-person meeting with the Minister has been scheduled for the following week in relation to the Minister's appointment of an independent Chairperson of a Steering Group to examine the future use of the Carlow College site. The President advised that she would share the minutes of the special Governing Body meeting held on 24 August with the Minister. The Chairperson further indicated that the views of the Governing Body on this matter would be communicated and discussed with the Minister, with a view to gaining a fuller understanding of the nature and remit of the appointment; • The President informed the Governing Body of the forthcoming resignation of Dr Joe Collins from his position in SETU and expressed her gratitude for his contribution and, in particular, for his support to the senior management team in navigating matters relating to Carlow College. The Governing Body also commended Dr Collins for his support and advice throughout the process and wished him every success in his new position.
1.7	<u>Approval for Committee Memberships</u> NOTED The University Secretary advised that planning in relation to the People, Culture & Equality Committee and the Talent & Learning Committee was at an advanced stage and indicated that associated matters may require online approval by the Governing Body in the coming weeks.
1.8	<u>GB Committees - Terms of Reference</u> NOTED As above.
1.9	<u>Arrangements for Conferring Ceremonies</u> AGREED To approve arrangements for Conferring Ceremonies as presented on a permanent basis.
1.10	<u>Matters arising (Action Log)</u> NOTED The Chairperson indicated that matters recorded in the Action Log are in hand. No additional matters arose.
1.11	<u>Correspondence</u> NOTED Correspondence received during the summer months from the Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science and the Chairperson of the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science.
2.	**<u>Report from President:</u>**
2.1	NOTED The President reported on her work over the period June to August 2026 highlighting the following; • Authorisation regarding the recruitment of Executive Dean and TU Professor posts; • Commencement of Professor Dunbar-Morris as Chief Academic Officer; • Wexford Campus Development: The President advised that a meeting with the Secretary General, followed by a visit to the Wexford Summerhill Campus, had taken place during the summer. The President further noted that the updated business case continues to be progressed and it is expected that it will be presented to the Finance & Capital Investment Committee at its meeting on 13 October, following which a special meeting of the Governing Body may be required; • Advised that correspondence had been received from Fórsa regarding the implementation of a work-to-rule and associated industrial action in relation to the Public Service Pay Agreement. It was noted that the matter is also extended to the wider public service;

- CAO Intake - The President reported a 7.6% increase in CAO intake, representing approximately 250 additional students compared with the previous year, together with a year-on-year increase in CAO points. It was noted that a more detailed update would be provided at the December meeting;
- The President highlighted the challenges being experienced in international student recruitment, particularly in relation to visa refusals. The President acknowledged the efforts of Dr Sarah Sartori in supporting University of Sanctuary students at SETU in navigating these difficulties.

The Chairperson thanked the President for her updates.

2.2 **President's workplan for academic year 2026/27:**

NOTED The President continued by outlining her Annual Workplan for 2026/27, highlighting the following key priorities and areas of focus:

- Continued implementation of the current Strategic Plan, together with preparatory work for the development of the new Strategic Plan 2028–2033;
- Updates on the implementation of various approved strategies, together with the development of a new Strategy for Sport;
- The commencement of the Veterinary Medicine and Pharmacy programmes, together with details of additional new programmes currently under development and consideration;
- Capital Projects – the President provided updates on the status of all major capital projects, including key developments and associated timelines;
- The continued development and embedding of the Development and Alumni function, noting that a dedicated team has now been established with a specific workplan to support and enable philanthropic activities and events. The President indicated that this would be a significant area of focus for her during the year;
- Organisational structures, including the recruitment of Executive Deans and Professors;
- Governance & Chairing responsibilities as well as other priorities including the establishment of a Planning & Resource Group.

The Chairperson thanked the President and acknowledged the substantive workplan presented before inviting comments or advice from members. The Governing Body commended the President on the comprehensive and ambitious workplan and expressed their full support for its delivery.

AGREED The President's workplan for 2026/27 was acknowledged and approved.

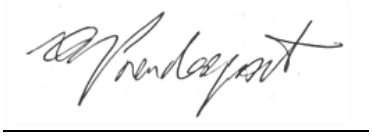
3. **Strategic Plan Implementation – Update:**

NOTED Dr Hayes was welcomed to the meeting. He commenced by providing an update on the progress of the Strategic Plan for the period September 2025 to the end of August 2026, highlighting progress and actions completed since the previous update, including key activities undertaken over the summer months. Dr Hayes also advised that the HEA Performance Agreement had been aligned with the Strategic Plan Implementation Plan. He noted that the University is required to report annually against the Performance Agreement through the submission of a Self-Evaluation Report, which is subject to Governing Body approval prior to submission to the HEA. While noting that progress was evident across most areas, Dr Hayes outlined a number of key issues, next steps and priority areas for focus during the coming year as well as highlighting that prioritisation of actions not yet achieved continue to progress with an accelerated movement towards achieving key targets. In concluding his presentation, Dr Hayes noted that planning for the Strategic Plan 2028–2033 was now coming into focus, with a consultation programme expected to commence in January 2027. Dr Hayes welcomed the Governing Body's input and advice as the planning and consultation process progresses.

	The Chairperson thanked the VP Strategy for the update and invited comments and advice from the Governing Body. Members sought clarification on a number of matters, particularly in relation to the understanding and reconciliation of student numbers and associated income. The VP Strategy and Chief Financial Officer outlined the actions being undertaken with academic departments to address these matters and ensure greater alignment and clarity in the reporting of student numbers and related income. The Chairperson commended the progress achieved in relation to the Strategic Plan and acknowledged the considerable work undertaken to date. The Chairperson expressed concern regarding the achievement of PhD enrolment targets and requested that additional detail be provided to assist the Governing Body in understanding the factors contributing to the current position. AGREED To approve the self-evaluation report and to submit the Performance Agreement to the HEA. ACTION Dr Hayes to provide further detail on PhD enrolment numbers and associated targets, as outlined above. The Chairperson thanked Dr Hayes for his update and he left the meeting.
4.	**<u>Approval of Annual Financial Statements 31.8.2025:</u>** NOTED Mr O'Toole and Mr Stenson were welcomed to the meeting. Mr O'Toole commenced by informing the Governing Body that the statutory audit had been completed by the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General (OCAG), and that the Annual Financial Statements for the year ending 31 August 2025 were now presented for approval. It was noted that no audit-related financial adjustments had arisen from the OCAG audit. Mr O'Toole outlined the key changes between the draft and final annual financial statements, noting a net change in the financial result of €0.1m and also noted that the final Pension Actuarial Valuation had been received, with no net impact on the financial result. He then informed the Committee that the Finance & Capital Investment Committee and Audit & Risk Committee had reviewed same at recent meetings and pending final approval and signing of the Annual Financial Statements by the Governing Body, the OCAG audit certificate would issue. Dr Dempsey, Chairperson of the Audit & Risk Committee, confirmed that the Committee had also reviewed the Annual Financial Statements and had met with representatives of the OCAG at its meeting the previous day. He noted that the OCAG had identified Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Talent as areas receiving increasing consideration across the sector and suggested that it would be beneficial for the University to consider these areas as part of its future planning. A discussion took place regarding options for the allocation of reserved funds, including potential investment in capital projects, in accordance with agreed HEA protocols. The Governing Body commended the Finance team on its stewardship of the University's financial position and noted that the positive outcome provided a high level of assurance to the Governing Body. AGREED To approve the Annual Financial Statements for the year ended 31 August 2025 and authorise the Chairperson and President to sign the Statements and submit them to the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General. Mr O'Toole and Mr Stenson then left the meeting.
6. *6.1*	**<u>Governance Matters:</u>** <u>Policy Approvals</u> NOTED The University Secretary informed the Governing Body that the Policy Committee had completed an electronic review of the University Safety Statement, noting that this review is undertaken annually and that no amendments were required.

	AGREED To approve the University Safety Statement as presented and to arrange for its publication on the University website.
6.2	Asiera membership NOTED The University Secretary provided context regarding the opportunity for the University to become a member of Asiera Technology Services CLG (formerly HEAnet and EduCampus). She also outlined that approval was required from the relevant Ministers in accordance with legislative provisions and that this is being progressed. It was noted that approval in relation to the appointment of a University representative to the Board would be brought forward in due course. AGREED To approve membership in Asiera Technology Services CLG as outlined.
6.3	CAO membership AGREED To approve the appointment of Professor Harriet Dunbar-Morris, Chief Academic Officer, as SETU's representative to the Central Applications Office (CAO).
7.	**Academic Council:** NOTED Academic Council minutes of 16 June and Standing Committee of 12 August 2026.
8.	**Minutes of GB Committees:**
8.1	NOTED Audit & Risk Committee draft minutes of 21 September2026
8.2	NOTED Finance & Capital Investment Committee draft minutes of 17 September 2026.
	SECTION B:
B1.	HEA – Annual Governance Statement Feedback Letter NOTED The University Secretary advised the Governing Body that, following feedback received from the HEA in relation to the Annual Governance Statement, work is ongoing in relation to the University's adoption of the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies (State Code). It was noted that this matter will be brought back to the Governing Body for further consideration in due course.
B2.	NOTED It was noted that plans and actions are now in place to address the recommendations arising from the External Effectiveness Review and that the Governance Unit will continue to monitor progress in relation to their implementation.
B3.	NOTED The Governing Body commended the content and presentation of the EDI Annual Report and requested that the report be made available on the University website.
B4.	NOTED The Governing Body Work Plan for 2026/2027 noting that this has been mapped to the workplans of the President and Executive Management Team.
B5.	NOTED The University Secretary updated the Governing Body in relation to a contract addendum concerning a third-party Licence Agreement with Insurtech DAC and outlined the process undertaken, in accordance with the provisions of the original contract.

B6.	NOTED The University Secretary drew attention to correspondence from the HEA outlining feedback arising from a Review of the Governance, Oversight and Rationale for Subsidiaries, Foundations and Trusts, and noted that work to implement the recommendations is underway.
12.	**AOB:** NOTED There being no further business, the Chairperson thanked all and closed the meeting at 17.15pm.

Approved:  **Date:** 3rd November 2026