Minutes of the 40th Governing Body meeting

Date:	Tuesday, 31st March 2026
Time:	3.00pm, Haughton Building Boardroom, Kilkenny Rd Campus, Carlow
Chairperson:	Professor Patrick Prendergast
Attendees:	Professor Veronica Campbell Ms Ruth Beadle (via MS Teams) Mr Jim Bergin Ms Eileen Curtis Dr David Dempsey Dr Greg Doyle Ms Trish Finegan Ms Louise Grubb (via MS Teams) Mr Richard Lacey Mr Kevin Lewis Professor Hannah McGee Ms Pauline Oakes Mr Derek Sheridan Ms Louise Walsh (via MS Teams)
Apologies:	Ms Lucy Kate Bosch Dr Zeta Dooly Professor Marie-Christine Ho Ba Tho Ms Erin Ní Fhoghlú

In attendance under the Code of Governance:

Ms Elaine Sheridan, VP Governance /University Secretary

In attendance by invitation of the Governing Body:

Ms Aisling O'Beirne, Chief Financial Officer

In attendance for Agenda Item 3:

Ms Kathryn Kiely, VP External Affairs

In attendance for Agenda Item 4:

Dr Richard Hayes, VP Strategy (via MS Teams)

In attendance for Agenda Item 5:

Ms Oonagh O'Donovan, O'Kennedy Consulting (via MS Teams)

In attendance for Agenda Item 6:

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. He welcomed new member Professor McGee and brief introductions were conveyed by all Governing Body members. 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>Approval of minutes 17th February 2026</u> AGREED It was agreed to approve the minutes of 17th February 2026 and to publish on the website. <u>Approval of minutes of Special Meeting 4th March 2026</u> AGREED It was agreed to approve the minutes of 4th March 2026 and to publish on the website.
1.4	<u>Matters arising (Action Log)</u> NOTED The Chairperson indicated that matters as noted on the Action Log are in hand and scheduled for completion before the end of the academic year. There were no other matters arising.
2.	**<u>Report from President:</u>** NOTED The President provided the Governing Body with the following updates; • Update in relation to a recent meeting with the HEA regarding the Veterinary Programme and ongoing engagement with the VCI; • Formal launch of Building 1, the commercial building on the Glassworks campus, in recent weeks; • Funding approval in principle, received from the HEA to progress to the next stage of the design process of the One Health building; • Continued engagement with WWETB regarding the Wexford campus development; • Formal appointment of BDP as the design team for the new Pharmacy & Veterinary buildings; • Approval of the National Student Accommodation Strategy by Government. The President informed the Governing Body that she and the Chairperson had attended a briefing on the matter with the Secretary General in recent days; • Update in relation to meetings with Carlow College; • Updates in relation to funding matters and senior staffing requests; • Internal and external engagements attended by the President during this reporting period, including SETU's delegation to USA (Washington, Savannah & Atlanta) and meetings with various strategic partners and agencies; • Plans for upcoming Foundation Day events; • The President extended congratulations to Mr Bergin on being the recipient of the Una McDermott Award for Contribution to Science; • SETU News and student success stories during the reporting period. The Chairperson thanked the President for her update and invited comments and advice from the Governing Body. Members sought further clarification regarding the financial protections in place for the University as a condition of ongoing discussions with Carlow College. The President advised that Mr Joe Collins has been tasked with undertaking a detailed analytical review of the Carlow College academic portfolio. She further noted that Mr Collins, in conjunction with the Chief Financial Officer, is developing a range of financial analyses and scenarios to inform consideration of this matter. It was suggested that additional information be sought in relation to the reserves recorded in the financial statements of Carlow College. Further discussion

	took place, during which the importance of ensuring appropriate protections for students was emphasised, as well as the need for careful consideration of communications on this matter. The Chairperson thanked the President for her update and the members for their contributions, and requested that a further update on Carlow College be scheduled for the next meeting. ACTION Discussion of Carlow College at the next meeting.
3.	**<u>Strategic Discussion:</u>** <u>Regional Engagement Plan 2026-2030</u> NOTED The VP External Affairs was welcomed to the meeting and provided a high-level overview of the proposed Regional Engagement Plan (REP) 2026–2030. She outlined the requirement for the REP in order to meet legislative obligations, ensure alignment with national economic strategies and higher education policy, and support the University's commitment to regional engagement as articulated in the Strategic Plan. The VP External Affairs advised that the establishment of the REP would also provide a framework to enhance the University's leadership profile and strengthen impact and connectivity with strategic partners and key stakeholders across the region. She outlined the three strategic pillars underpinning the REP, together with the associated objectives and enabling actions that will support its delivery. Proposed costings over a five-year period were presented, including revised structures and resource requirements designed to target external funding opportunities and support key initiatives. The principal risks associated with the REP, along with proposed mitigating measures, were also outlined. In concluding, the VP External Affairs invited comments and advice from the Governing Body and sought approval of the Regional Engagement Plan 2026–2030. The Chairperson thanked the VP External Affairs for her presentation. The Governing Body suggested that it would be beneficial to develop a set of key performance indicators (KPIs), including measures such as the number of engagements and outcome-focused agreements or partnerships that demonstrate regional impact. The President advised that such KPIs would be developed and reported as part of the annual update on the implementation and progress of the REP. The Governing Body commended the progress of the REP, thanked the VP External Affairs for her update, and she subsequently left the meeting. ACTION The development of a set of KPIs to be developed for inclusion in the annual progress report of the Regional Engagement Plan 2026–2030 to Governing Body. AGREED To approve the Regional Engagement Plan 2026–2030
4.	**<u>Strategic Plan Implementation - Update:</u>** NOTED The VP Strategy was welcomed to the meeting and presented an update on the progress of actions with a due date of March 2026. He reported a high level of activity, highlighting actions completed since the previous update, and confirmed that the majority of actions remain on track. Actions that have experienced delays continue to progress in accordance with revised target dates. He further advised that there has been no change to the status of the top twelve strategic actions, which remain stable. The Chairperson thanked the VP Strategy for his presentation. The Governing Body expressed satisfaction with the steady progress of the Strategic Plan and the achievement of planned goals and actions. They thanked the VP Strategy for his update and he left the meeting.

5.	**<u>Update re. Philanthropy:</u>** NOTED Ms O'Donovan of O'Kennedy Consulting was welcomed to the meeting. The VP Governance outlined the context of the University's engagement with O'Kennedy Consulting, including an overview of the programme of work undertaken over the past eighteen months. Ms O'Donovan continued by outlining the activities undertaken in the development of a Philanthropy Plan and Framework for the University. She noted that this work is timely, aligning with the development of the National Philanthropy Policy. Ms O'Donovan further provided an update on the current status of the workplan, which includes the following key elements: • the development of a three-year philanthropic plan; • the establishment of an in-house Development and Alumni Office through a dedicated recruitment process; • secured and prospective funding commitments arising from stakeholder engagement; • the implementation of an early alumni engagement plan, including the introduction of Alumni Awards; and • the inaugural Philanthropy event, scheduled for 17 April. The Chairperson thanked Ms O'Donovan and invited comments from the Governing Body. Members sought clarification on a number of points and offered constructive suggestions to further enhance and support the workplan. The Chairperson thanked Ms O'Donovan for her presentation and she left the meeting.
6.	**<u>Budgets:</u>** NOTED The VP Finance/Financial Controller joined the meeting and outlined the review process undertaken by the Executive Management Team and the Finance & Capital Investment Committee. In providing an overview of the 2026 budget compared to the 2025 actuals, he highlighted the following key points: • a breakeven financial position is anticipated for the 2026 calendar year; • additional funding requirements are expected in respect of Veterinary and Pharmacy activities; • a forecasted increase and strong recovery in international student recruitment; • increased pay costs arising from public sector pay agreements, posts recruited in the previous year that are now included for a full year, and additional posts anticipated during 2026; • increased non-pay expenditure; and • next steps, which include a detailed review of budget allocations across individual faculties and departments, followed by review meetings with Finance teams, with the objective of agreeing budget allocations by the end of May 2026. The VP Finance/Financial Controller outlined the key assumptions underpinning the income and expenditure forecasts for the current year, with projections extending to 2027/28. He also presented an overview of core grant allocations for SETU in comparison with allocations across the Technological University sector. Further detail was provided to the Governing Body on trends relating to tuition fees, pay and non-pay expenditure. The VP Finance/Financial Controller advised that the Finance & Capital Investment Committee had reviewed the budget as presented and, following its consideration, is recommending that the Governing Body approve the budget. The Governing Body expressed concerns regarding the forecasts presented, particularly in relation to the cessation of additional funding streams and the increased reliance on core grant funding. The Chief Financial Officer acknowledged that further work is required and advised that efforts are ongoing to develop an expected-case budget that is equitable and that appropriately addresses the requirements of all areas. It was proposed that a further review of the budget be undertaken in order to make saving to incorporate a contingency buffer of approximately €1 million as opposed to the current breakeven projection, and this was agreed. The Chief Financial Officer advised that further work is ongoing to refine realistic budgets, with a

	number of scenarios under development. The President noted the requirement under TU legislation to submit a balanced budget and confirmed that, to facilitate a mid-April meeting with the HEA, the budget must be submitted within the coming days. AGREED It was agreed that subject to the change discussed to approve the budget for submission to the HEA. The Chairperson thanked the VP Finance for his presentation and he left the meeting.
7. *7.1* *7.2*	**Governance Matters:** Policy Approvals AGREED Following the amendments proposed by the Governing Body at the previous meeting, it was agreed to approve the updated Treasury Management Policy and to publish on the website. AGM dispensation for Subsidiaries/DAC's NOTED The VP Governance outlined the requirement for written resolutions to dispense with the obligation for SETU subsidiary companies to hold an Annual General Meeting. It was noted that the resolutions relate specifically to Lean Industry 4.0 DAC and ThreeD DAC. She further advised that, subject to ongoing discussions with Enterprise Ireland, it is likely that ThreeD DAC will commence a wind-down process. AGREED On the recommendation of the Finance & Capital Investment Committee, it was agreed to approve the written resolutions referred to above.
8.	**Academic Council:** NOTED Academic Council minutes of 27th January 2026. The President highlighted matters pertaining to external examiner nominations and discussions relating to an AI plagiarism tool causing issues for students.
9. *9.1* *9.2* *9.3*	**Minutes of GB Committees:** NOTED Finance & Capital Investment Committee minutes of 5th February 2026. NOTED Joint Quality Committee draft minutes of 26th February 2026. Ms Oakes advised that good progress is being made in relation to the Committee's workplan and requested that Governing Body members serving on this Committee be formally addressed. ACTION Chairperson and President to address additional membership of the JQC. NOTED Nominations Committee draft minutes of 10th February 2026.
10.	**AOB:** There were no other matters that required attention.
  B1. **B2.**	**SECTION B:** AGREED To approve the appointment of Dr Don O'Neill to the role of Vice President for Global Partnerships. NOTED Quarterly report to HEA for the period September to December 2025. There being no other matters to attend to the Chairperson thanked all and closed the meeting at 6.07pm.

Approved: *Mr Jim Bergin* (Deputy Chairperson) **Date: 12th May 2026**