Minutes of the 41st Governing Body meeting

Date: Tuesday, 12th May 2026
Time: 3.00pm, T&L Building Boardroom, Cork Rd Campus, Waterford

Chairperson: Mr Jim Bergin, Deputy Chairperson

Attendees:
Professor Veronica Campbell
Ms Ruth Beadle
Ms Lucy Kate Bosch
Ms Eileen Curtis
Dr David Dempsey
Dr Zeta Dooly (via MS Teams)
Dr Greg Doyle
Ms Trish Finegan
Mr Richard Lacey
Mr Kevin Lewis (via MS Teams)
Professor Hannah McGee
Ms Pauline Oakes
Mr Derek Sheridan
Ms Louise Walsh

Apologies:
Professor Patrick Prendergast
Ms Louise Grubb
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:
Mr David Denieffe, Chief Operations Officer
Dr Joe Collins, Director, Carlow College Strategic Initiative

In attendance for Agenda Item 4:
Dr John Power, Branding Manager
Ms Kay McCarthy, MCCP
Ms Ozlem Ergor, MCCP

In attendance for Agenda Item 5:
Dr Helen Murphy, Head, Faculty of Education & Lifelong Learning

In attendance for Agenda Item 7:
Dr Derek O'Byrne, VP Academic Affairs
Dr Paul O'Leary, Quality Promotion & Academic Policy Development

In attendance for Agenda Item 8:
Dr Derek O'Byrne, VP Academic Affairs
Dr Colette Moloney, Assistant Registrar

Secretariat: Ms Annette Byrne

Item Title - Section A	
1.	**Chairperson's Opening:**
1.1	Welcome & approval of Agenda NOTED The Chairperson welcomed all to the meeting.
1.2	Conflict of Interest 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	Approval of minutes 31st March 2026 AGREED It was agreed to approve the minutes of 31st March 2026 and to publish on the website.
1.4	Terms of Reference – People, Culture & Equality Committee AGREED To approve the Terms of Reference as presented, noting that nominations relating to external membership will be brought back to the Governing Body in due course.
1.5	Appointment to Joint Quality Committee NOTED Professor McGee absented herself from the meeting. The Deputy Chairperson then proposed that Professor McGee be appointed as a member of the Joint Quality Committee, as recommended by the Chairperson and the President. AGREED To approve the appointment as outlined above. Professor McGee rejoined the meeting,
1.6	Matters arising (Action Log) 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.	**Report from President:** NOTED The President opened by acknowledging the recent passing of Mr Ian O'Neill, a staff member in the School of Engineering. She then proceeded to provide the Governing Body with the following updates: • Progress being made in relation to major capital projects including Glassworks, Wexford campus development and Pharmacy & Veterinary Medicine facilities; • Informed the Governing Body that a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between SETU and WWETB has been agreed; • Correspondence had been received from the Veterinary Council of Ireland confirming that SETU had provided reasonable assurance that the new programme will meet the required professional standards. • An update was provided on the recent annual budget meeting with the HEA; • Updates were provided on activities associated with the recent philanthropy event, along with the ongoing recruitment process for a Development and Alumni Manager; • Foundation Day events outlining the overarching theme and key speakers for each event; • A summary of external engagement activities was presented, including events attended by the President such as the launch of the Sustainability Strategy;

	- Additional updates included the thematic review of Student Retention, the appointment of the CEO for the Technological Universities Association (TUA), and the signing of Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) relating to Pharmacy degree programmes; - The Walton Institute has been awarded €1 million in funding from Research Ireland to support investment in an artificial intelligence and high-performance computing (HPC) platform. This announcement is currently under embargo pending formal announcement in the coming weeks; - The educational loan of substantial mainframe technology from IBM to support education and research was acknowledged; - A number of upcoming EU Presidency affiliated events to be hosted by SETU were noted; - Student and staff success stories were highlighted, including recognition at the recent Education Awards, where the EDI Office received a national award. The Deputy Chairperson thanked the President for her comprehensive update and invited comments from the Governing Body. Members of the Governing Body expressed concerns regarding potential risks associated with future funding, particularly in relation to whether such risks may impact the University's ability to sustain ongoing progress and support future development initiatives. The Chief Financial Officer advised that, in addition to contingencies built into the budget, a programme of work on financial scenario planning is currently underway. This work is aimed at future-proofing the University's financial position, supporting diversification of income streams, and maximising financial stability where possible. The Chief Financial Officer also confirmed that financial performance updates will be presented to the Governing Body on a quarterly basis. The Deputy Chairperson thanked all members for their input and continued support.
3.	<u>**Update – Carlow College**</u> NOTED Mr Denieffe and Dr Collins were welcomed to the meeting. Dr Collins commenced by providing background and context regarding Carlow College St. Patrick's (CCSP) and outlined the request from the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS) regarding SETU's involvement. He then presented a number of scenarios that had been examined, considered, and assessed in consultation with relevant parties. Dr Collins recommended that Scenario 3 be adopted, noting that it aligns with the principles previously approved by the Governing Body. Dr Collins further provided assurances that SETU's proposed role would be one of oversight only, with no financial burden or operational responsibilities. This position is supported by confirmation received in the correspondence from the Minister. He also noted that the proposed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) will provide clarity and protection for the University, with a more detailed legal agreement to follow in due course. Dr Collins requested approval from the Governing Body to; - approve the adoption of Scenario 3; - agree, in principle, to the request from the Minister; and - approve the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). In concluding, Dr Collins outlined proposed timelines for communications and financial transfer arrangements. He also noted that any discussions relating to the future use of Carlow College St. Patrick's (CCSP) properties would be addressed through separate business cases. The Deputy Chairperson thanked Dr Collins for his update and extended compliments to the team on the progress achieved to date. He then opened the floor to comments and advice. Members expressed concerns regarding potential issues that may arise during the teach-out process, and the potential impact such matters could have on the reputation of SETU. Dr Collins advised that the request from DFHERIS is for SETU to act as a conduit only, with no operational or academic delivery responsibility during the teach-out period. He further noted that agreed key performance targets have been established for Carlow College, which will be monitored and measured by the HEA and DFHERIS. It was noted that good progress had been made in this regard, and members of the Governing Body expressed their support to proceed as proposed.

	The President acknowledged the work of Dr Collins and the senior team in achieving significant progress within a short period of time, and sought approval to proceed with the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the parties. AGREED The Governing Body unanimously supported and approved requests outlined above including the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). The Deputy Chairperson thanked Mr Denieffe and Dr Collins and they both left the meeting.
4.	**<u>Brand Performance & Impact Evaluation</u>** NOTED Dr Power (Branding Manager), Ms McCarthy and Ms Ergor (MCCP) were welcomed to the meeting. Dr Power introduced an update on the recent Brand Impact Evaluation Study conducted by MCCP. The study assessed the perception of the SETU brand, its positioning within the region, and the extent to which it resonates with key audiences. Ms McCarthy outlined the key findings, noting that the SETU brand is strongly recognised and is having a clear impact within the South East region. However, she highlighted that public awareness of the brand beyond the region is less well developed, presenting a significant opportunity to focus on increasing national and wider recognition. Ms McCarthy added that, in order to address these gaps, it is important to focus on building stronger national and international awareness. She emphasised the need for a more ambitious approach within the current landscape in line with recommendations within the wider report. Ms McCarthy thanked the members for their attention and indicated that she would be happy to take any questions or comments from the Governing Body. A brief discussion followed. Dr Power noted that the findings outlined in the report will inform the development of a focused workplan, which will be progressed in collaboration with a number of areas across the University. The Deputy Chairperson thanked the presenters for their attendance and complimented them on the work completed to date. Dr Power, Ms McCarthy and Ms Ergor then left the meeting.
5.	**<u>Lifelong Learning Strategic Plan – Implementation Update</u>** NOTED Dr Murphy, Head of the Faculty of Education and Lifelong Learning, joined the meeting. She presented an overview of the key targets and objectives, outlining the status of targets in the first year of implementation of the Strategy for Lifelong Learning. Dr Murphy also outlined a number of developments achieved to date, including: • Ongoing work to integrate and align processes; • Continued establishment of baseline data across all campuses; • Securing of funding for general lifelong learning programmes and specific projects; • Establishment of a dedicated Business Development team; • Increased teaching and industry-specific capacity through the use of part-time panels; • An update on the current status of the top five strategic objectives; • Delivery of various events and engagements during the period, including a Family Carers event attended by the President, Catherine Connolly; • An overview of Springboard programmes to be offered in the 2026/27 academic year; • Submission of funding applications. The Deputy Chairperson thanked Dr Murphy for her update and commended the progress achieved to date, acknowledging the complexity of the Education and Lifelong Learning landscape. Dr Murphy then left the meeting.

6.	**<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. Clarification was sought regarding the Sexual Misconduct: Student Policy and Procedure, specifically in relation to the timelines for addressing complaints and the safeguards in place for students during investigation periods. It was noted that these queries would be referred back to the policy owner. 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: • Probation Policy; • Voluntary Campus Transfer Policy; • Sexual Misconduct: Student Policy and Procedure; • Equality, Diversity & Inclusion; • Equality Statement.
7.	**<u>CINNTE Review - Recommendations Implementation</u>** NOTED Dr O'Byrne and Dr O'Leary were welcomed to the meeting. Dr O'Byrne commenced by providing a recap of the CINNTE review process, noting that it recognised and validated the University's efforts to establish a single, cohesive framework for quality assurance and governance. He further outlined that a number of areas for improvement had been identified across several categories, including Governance and Structure, Strategy, Student Experience, and Research. These recommendations have been accepted and have informed the development of a Quality Improvement Plan, which has assisted in guiding the implementation of actions to address the identified areas. Dr O'Leary continued by outlining the actions completed to date and those currently in progress, noting that a further five actions are expected to be completed in line with the conclusion of the ROaD project in December 2026. He also highlighted a slight delay in the progression of the Modular Survey, Core HR and Student Records Management (Banner) systems. However, he advised that these matters are being progressed and are subject to ongoing monitoring. In concluding, Dr O'Leary advised the Governing Body of an upcoming quality dialogue meeting with QQI in June to evaluate progression of the implementation plan. The Deputy Chairperson thanked Dr O'Leary for his presentation, following which he left the meeting. Dr O'Byrne remained in attendance for the next item on the agenda.
8.	**<u>Honorary Degrees</u>** NOTED Dr Moloney joined the meeting. Dr O'Byrne informed the Governing Body that the Advisory Committee on Honorary Degrees had completed its evaluation of nominations received following a recent call. Dr Moloney then presented the name and biographical details of the nominee recommended by the Advisory Committee for the award of Doctor of the University (*Honoris Causa*). Due to a potential conflict of interest, Ms Walsh excused herself from the meeting at 17.25pm. Following a discussion, the Governing Body expressed its support for the proposed candidates. It was therefore agreed to confer honorary degrees on two nominees at the 2026 Conferring Ceremonies, noting that one of the nominees had received prior approval in the previous year. The Deputy Chairperson thanked Dr O'Byrne and Dr Moloney and they both left the meeting. Ms Walsh returned to the meeting at 17.27pm.

9.	**Academic Council:** NOTED Academic Council minutes of 3rd March 2026.
10.	**Minutes of GB Committees:**
10.1	NOTED Audit & Risk Committee draft minutes 14th May 2026. The ARC Chairperson advised the Governing Body that the committee will attend an AI training session in the coming weeks and also that the committee has requested that matters pertaining to Carlow College be added to the Strategic Risk Register.
10.2	NOTED Finance & Capital Investment Committee draft minutes of 25th March 2026.
10.3	NOTED Policy Committee draft minutes of 6th May 2026, noting recommendations for policy approvals outlined during the course of the meeting.
	SECTION B:
B1.	AGREED To accept and approve request to award Emeritus titles to Professor Peter McLoughlin, retired staff member of SETU.
B2.	NOTED Conflict of Interest Annual Declaration Report 2026.
B3.	NOTED Response to HEA regarding a Review of Governance, Oversight & Rationale for Subsidiaries, noting three actions to be addressed by SETU.
B4.	NOTED Draft minutes relating to SETU DAC and subsidiary companies.
11.	**AOB:** NOTED Ms Finegan extended an invitation to all Governing Body members to the upcoming Post Graduate Conference event. NOTED Ms Finegan enquired whether the University could provide assistance to the Waterford Centre of Music following the destruction of its premises in a recent fire at the Tycor Business Centre. The President advised that engagement with the organisation is currently underway. ACTION It was agreed that the relevant statement/press release regarding Carlow College would be circulated to the Governing Body. The President reminded members that the Chairperson is the designated spokesperson for the Governing Body. ACTION It was agreed to arrange for the final meeting of the Governing Body on 16th June to be hosted at the SETU Wexford Campus. There being no other matters to attend to, the Deputy Chairperson thanked all for their input and closed the meeting 17.45pm.

Approved: ____________________ **Date: 16th June 2026**