Minutes of the 35th Statutory Governing Body meeting

Date:	Tuesday, 23rd September 2025
Time:	3.00pm – 6.15pm, Council Chamber, County Hall Wexford County Council, Carricklawn, Wexford
Chairperson:	Professor Patrick Prendergast
Attendees:	Professor Veronica Campbell Mr Jim Bergin (via MS Teams) Ms Eileen Curtis Dr David Dempsey Ms Pauline Oakes Professor Marie-Christine Ho Ba Tho (via MS Teams) Dr Zeta Dooly Dr Greg Doyle Mr Richard Lacey Mr Kevin Lewis Mr Derek Sheridan Ms Louise Walsh Ms Trish Finegan (via MS Teams) Ms Erin Foley (via MS Teams)
Apologies:	Ms Louise Grubb Ms Ruth Beadle Ms Lucy Kate Bosch

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

In attendance for Agenda Item 3:
Mr Hugh Hennessy, Indecon (via MS Teams)
Mr Peter Kingston, Indecon (via MS Teams)

In attendance for Agenda Item 4:
Dr Derek O'Byrne, VP Academic Affairs, Teaching & Learning (via MS Teams)

In attendance for Agenda Item 5:
Ms Camille McDermott, Deloitte (via MS Teams)

In attendance for Agenda Item 6:
Dr Richard Hayes, VP Strategy

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>GB Standing Orders</u> NOTED The Chairperson drew attention to the above highlighting that in line with best practice the Governing Body should review and approve Standing Orders on an annual basis. As no amendments are required it was agreed to approve the Governing Body Standing Orders as presented.
1.3	<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. The Chairperson expressed his gratitude to Wexford County Council for hosting the Governing Body meeting and to CEO, Mr Eddie Taffe.
1.4	<u>Nominations – Student Nominees 25/26</u> NOTED The University Secretary informed the Governing Body that the Nominations Committee had met the previous week to consider student nominees as proposed by the Students Union in line with regulations as approved by the Minister. The proposed nominees are as follows; • Erin Ní Fhoghlú; • Lucy Kate Bosch; • Trish Finegan. The Chairperson highlighted that a note explaining the current gender balance ratio of 63% female and 37% male would be required at a later stage in the Annual Governance Statement. The student nominees were then invited to join the meeting as members of the Governing Body. Ms Ní Fhoghlú and Ms Finegan joined the meeting and apologies were noted for Ms Bosch who is expected to attend the next meeting. Ms Finegan was welcomed back to the Governing Body and Ms Ní Fhoghlú provided brief self-introduction.
1.5	<u>Approval of minutes</u> AGREED To approve the minutes of 17th June and 31st August 2025 and to publish on the website.
1.6	<u>Matters arising (Action Log)</u> NOTED The Chairperson indicated that matters as noted on the Action Log are in hand. There were no other matters arising.
1.7	<u>Arrangements for Conferring Ceremonies</u> NOTED The Chairperson referred to previous arrangements for the approval of Pro-Chancellors and requested that this is revised to grant approval enabling the Chancellor to make appointments as required from all Governing Body members. All those present indicated their approval to proceed with the proposed changes outlined.
2.	**<u>Report from President:</u>**
2.1	NOTED The President referred to actions and events over the summer months as outlined in her report and provided the Governing Body with following updates;

	• A recent network fault that caused disruption on the Waterford campus the previous week, however the issue has since been rectified and operations have returned to normal; • The tragic passing in recent weeks of an SETU student following a cycling accident, extending condolences to the family and friends of the student.
2.2	<u>President's Workplan for 2025/26</u> NOTED The President presented her Work Plan for the 2025/26 academic year outlining areas of priority as identified in the Strategic Plan. The President indicated that there is a key focus on the progression of Veterinary and Pharmacy programmes, as well as progressing development of Physiotherapy, Optometry and Teacher Education degrees noting that engagement with the HEA is this regard has been commenced. She stressed the importance of securing approval for funding in relation to the development of Glassworks and the Wexford Campus, however timelines around delivery are dependent on Government decisions. Additional activities highlighted on the President's Workplan include; • Ongoing and active engagement by all TU Presidents regarding Student Accommodation; • Ongoing work in relation to securing funding for TEF submissions; • Ongoing engagement with Carlow College as well as other internal and external stakeholders; • Establishment of a new TU advocacy group - Technological Universities Association (TUA) to replace Technological Higher Education Association (THEA). The Chairperson thanked the President acknowledging the substantive workplan presented and opened to the floor for comments or advice. Concerns were expressed in relation to the lack of response from the funding body in relation to capital business cases submitted. It was also suggested that it would be beneficial to identify cultural baselines and conduct a cultural audit and it was agreed that the VP People, Culture and EDI would be invited to the next meeting to discuss this matter further. AGREED The President's workplan was acknowledged and approved. ACTION VP People, Culture & EDI to provide detail on the approach to a culture audit as part of her HR Update to Governing Body at the next meeting.
3.	**<u>Economic & Social Impact Assessment Briefing:</u>** NOTED The Chairperson welcomed Mr Hennessey and Mr Kingston, Indecon, International Economic and Strategic Consultants to the meeting. Mr Hennessy commenced by presenting the key findings of a social and economic impact study conducted during the summer months, noting that the findings are based on best practice modelling and demonstrate the regional importance of SETU in providing access routes to higher education and building skills in the region. Mr Kingston outlined the processes and methodologies undertaken during the study, the impact of teaching and learning, the economic impact of the graduate premium, SETU expenditure, international students and research expenditure on the region. NOTED The Chairperson thanked Indecon for the very informative presentation and noting the very important information contained in the report, opened the floor to comments. Further clarity was provided to queries expressed by members of the Governing Body. The President also thanked Mr Hennessy and Mr Kingston for the comprehensive analysis provided in the report and indicated that once the report has been finalised a formal launch of same would take place in mid-November and requested that until then the detail contained within the report remains strictly confidential. Mr Hennessey and Mr Kingston thanked all for the opportunity to present to the Governing Body and left the meeting.
4.	**<u>CINNTE Review Implementation Plan</u>:** NOTED Dr O'Byrne joined the meeting. The President commenced by providing contextual background to the review and the published independent panel report which includes 19 commendations and 20 recommendations. In providing a high level summary of these recommendations the President outlined that

	an executive owner has been allocated to each action, timelines for delivery have been established and all are aligned to the Strategic Plan. The implementation plan has been considered by the Academic Council at their recent meeting and therefore recommended for approval by the Governing Body. Once approval is granted the implementation plan will be submitted to Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI), published on their website and a progress report of the status of recommendations will be provided to the Governing Body in Q2 2026. Dr O'Byrne noted that the report strongly endorses the work of the University and welcomed the commendations and the recommendations outlined. AGREED To approve the SETU Quality Implementation Plan as presented and to submit same to Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI). Dr O'Byrne left the meeting at this stage.
5.	**<u>Update on Governance trends & key risks in the HEI sector:</u>** NOTED The Chairperson welcomed Ms McDermott to the meeting noting a recommendation by the Audit & Risk regarding the relevance and suitability of presenting details on this topic to the Governing Body. Ms McDermott commenced by providing a brief introduction to the committee highlighting her involvement in providing updates to the sector regarding Governance trends and key risks. In delivering her presentation she outlined the following; • Significant risks facing for the Higher Education sector, primarily Cyber risks, Funding challenges, Recruitment challenges and Geopolitical issues; • Evolving governance, building sustainable governance and what this means for a Governing Body e.g. ESG governance, AI literacy and fluency; • The role of the Audit & Risk Committee, noting a strong focus on internal controls; • Approach to Internal Audit and trends in the sector noting themes arising across the audit work carried out in the sector e.g. Policy Frameworks, Resource Planning, Strategic monitoring; • Recap on good practice guidelines, protecting values & culture, providing stewardship, oversight and accountability. NOTED A brief discussion ensued in relation to the ranking of keys risks, workforce planning and risks around Artificial Intelligence. The Chairperson and members thanked Ms McDermott for her presentation and she left the meeting. Further discussion continued regarding AI governance and the President provided further detail on the matter. On foot of this discussion, it was proposed that the Governing Body should give more consideration to this matter and that a discussion paper be provided at a future Governing Body meeting. ACTION To provide a paper regarding Artificial Intelligence (Gen AI) for discussion at the next meeting.
6. *6.1*	**<u>Strategic Plan:</u>** <u>Strategic Plan Annual Report</u> NOTED Dr Hayes was welcomed to the meeting. He commenced by providing an update on progress of the Strategic Plan during 2024/25 noting 12 key actions and indicators, the status of each key action and also a summary overview of the current action plan noting 33 actions completed, 60 actions in progress and 2 actions not yet started. Dr Hayes highlighted that 2 new actions regarding Export Controls and Artificial Intelligence (AI) are incorporated into the Strategic Plan. In summarising, Dr Hayes indicated that significant progress has been made, the plan remains on track and whilst remaining cognisant of external challenges and dependencies that may impact progress, the University continues to move forward to achieve targets and timelines. The Governing Body commended the progress being made and stressed the importance of realigning actions in line with original goals where possible. The Chairperson thanked Dr Hayes for his update.

6.2	HEA Performance Agreement NOTED Dr Hayes indicated that the HEA Performance Agreement has been aligned to the Strategic Plan implementation plan, and the University is obliged to report annually against the performance agreement in the form of self-evaluation reports. He therefore requested approval for the report as presented to be submitted to the HEA. AGREED To approve the self-evaluation report and to submit the Performance Agreement to the HEA. The Chairperson thanked Dr Hayes and he left the meeting.
7.	**Governance Matters:**
7.1	Policy Approvals NOTED The Chairperson outlined the review and recommendation for approval as set out by the Policy Committee in relation to the policies below noting also the minutes of two meetings of the Policy Committee provided to the Governing Body in draft form: • Academic Unit Reviews Policy • Leave Management Policy • Professional Service Reviews Policy • Safety Statement • Visiting Academic Policy • Extension – Intellectual Property Policy AGREED It was agreed to approve the above with the exception of the Leave Management Policy pending clarification on a query about Jury Service leave and once clarification is provided to bring this policy back to the next meeting. It was also agreed that approved policies would be uploaded to the website.
8.	**Academic Council:** NOTED Academic Council minutes 17th June 2025 and Standing Committee minutes of 19th August 2025.
9.	**Minutes of GB Committees:**
9.1	NOTED Policy Committee draft minutes of 10th July and 19th September 2025.
9.2	NOTED Nominations Committee draft minutes of 18th September 2025.
10.	**AOB:**
10.1	NOTED The University Secretary drew attention to correspondence received by the Board of Novus from Novus Senior Management regarding pay proposals. The Novus management have requested that this matter is brought to the attention of the Governing Body. It was deemed that it would be appropriate for the Board of Novus to report on this matter in their annual Compliance Report.
10.2	NOTED The President excused herself from the meeting. The Chairperson informing the Governing Body that the annual review of the President's performance is now due and proposed that Ms Curtis would assist him in conducting this review. The Chairperson and Ms Curtis excused themselves from the meeting and Dr Dempsey resumed the position of Chairperson. Dr Dempsey then put it to the Governing Body to accept the proposal put forward by the Chairperson. AGREED To accept the proposal outlined above and progress the relevant review. The Chairperson, President and Ms Curtis rejoined the meeting.

	ACTION The Chairperson to progress the President’s Annual Review above and report back to the Governing Body at a future meeting.
	SECTION B:
B1.	Staff Appointments NOTED To defer the request for a staff appointment as presented pending clarification regarding the proposed 1-year specified purpose contract attaching to the role. The President indicated that once clarification is provided, she would revert to the Governing Body and seek approval for the staff appointment via electronic communication. This was accepted by all present. ACTION The President to revert to the Governing Body once clarification on the above is available.
B2.	AGREED To approve the appointment of Professor Marie Claie Van Hout to the board of directors of Insurtech DAC.
B3.	NOTED Item deferred re. Finance & Investment Committee member.
B4.	NOTED Terms of Reference and Charter for IT Executive Committee
B5.	NOTED Information regarding VLE project.
B6.	AGREED Dates for Governing Body meetings September 2025 to June 2026.
B7.	NOTED Five year Financial Forecast (2025-2030).
B8.	NOTED HEA Feedback Letter – SETU AGS 2023-24.
B9.	NOTED EDI Strategy/Plan – Annual update to Governing Body.
B10.	NOTED Annual Report to Governing Body – Commercialisation Committee.
B11.	NOTED Draft Minutes re. SETU DAC & Subsidiary companies.
	There being no other matters to attend to, the Chairperson thanked all and closed the meeting at 18.30pm.

Approved: ____________________ **Date:** 21st October 2025