

Minutes of the 21st Governing Body meeting

Date: Tuesday, 5th December 2023
Time: 3pm – 5.50pm, Tourism & Leisure Building Boardroom, Waterford campus

Chair: Professor Patrick Prendergast, Chairperson

Attendees: Professor Veronica Campbell
Ms Ruth Beadle
Mr Jim Bergin
Ms Sarah Clarke (via MS Teams)
Ms Eileen Curtis
Dr David Dempsey
Mr Claus Derenda
Mr Mark Dunne
Ms Louise Grubb
Professor Marie-Christine Ho Ba Tho (via MS Teams)
Mr Richard Lacey
Mr Kevin Lewis
Ms Adele Mahon
Ms Cynthia Ní Mhurchú (via MS Teams)
Ms Pauline Oakes
Mr Ray Ryan (via MS Teams)

Apologies: Ms Milena Lescova
Dr Kathleen Moore Walsh

In attendance under the Code of Governance:
Ms Elaine Sheridan, Vice President for Corporate Affairs and Finance
Mr Cormac O'Toole, Vice President for Corporate Affairs

In attendance for Agenda Item 4 & 5
Dr Richard Hayes, Vice President Strategy

In attendance for Agenda Items 6 & 7
Dr Derek O'Byrne, Vice President Academic Affairs & Registrar
Dr David Denieffe, Vice President Academic Affairs

Secretariat: Ms Annette Byrne

Item Title	
1. 1.1 1.2 1.3 1.4 1.5 1.6	<u>Chairperson’s Opening:</u> <u>Welcome & approval of Agenda</u> The Chairperson welcomed all and confirmed the meeting was quorate. He confirmed approval of the agenda and commenced the normal business. <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. Ms Sheridan and Mr O’Toole indicated a conflict regarding Item 3 on the agenda and proposed that they would excuse themselves from the meeting during this item. This was agreed. No other members present declared a conflict for this meeting. <u>Approval of minutes: 24th October 2023</u> AGREED Subject to a minor amendment under Item 5, to approve the minutes of 24th October 2023 and to publish on the website. <u>Appointment to EDI subcommittee</u> NOTED Ms Beadle proposed the appointment of Ms Mary Connors Aldridge as an independent external member of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee. AGREED To approve membership as outlined above. <u>Appointment to chair the Joint Quality Committee</u> NOTED The Chairperson proposed the appointment of Ms Pauline Oakes as Chair of the Joint Quality Committee of the Governing Body and the Academic Council. AGREED To approve the appointment as outlined above. The Chairperson thanked Ms Oakes for her agreement to take on this role. <u>Matters arising (Action Log)</u> NOTED Ms Sheridan provided an update regarding legal opinion received with regards to the composition of membership of the Audit & Risk Committee as included in the current Terms of Reference. Following a brief discussion it was suggested that upon the next scheduled review of these terms of reference, consideration would be given to changes in the composition of membership. NOTED Ms Sheridan informed the Governing Body that the legal opinion regarding the Gender Identity and Expression policy has been received and will be considered by the EDI Committee at their next meeting. NOTED The Chairperson provided further updates regarding the Action Log highlighting items that are in progress or have been completed, therefore closed out and a number of matters currently in progress. There were no other matters arising.
2.	<u>President’s report to the Governing Body:</u> NOTED The President provided updates to the Governing Body as follows; Strategic & Capital matters: ▪ Upcoming meeting (8/12) with the HEA regarding systems performance; ▪ Allocations for TU-RISE and TSAF funding initiatives; Campus development: ▪ contracts signed for purchase of former Waterford Crystal site;

- Wexford property acquisition - Final stages of CPO are in train and formation of an external advisory group is underway;

Staffing:

- Update regarding staffing and organisational structures including recruitment processes currently underway for senior roles;

Governance/Chairing:

- Appointments have been made to a number of committees including Quality Committee, Conflict of Interest Committee and Athena Swan self-assessment team; SETU elected as Chair to Academic Council of European university (EU Connexus);

Internal Community:

- Conferring ceremonies including first Honorary Doctorate awards. The President expressed her gratitude to Dr Dempsey and Mr Lewis for their assistance in carrying out Pro Chancellor duties;

Regional & Global Community:

- A number of meetings have taken place, including with the Minister of DFHERIS, Oireachtas representatives, external stakeholders and CEOs of Local Authorities.

Other:

- Upcoming Academic Council elections. The President highlighted a matter that has been brought to her and the Returning Officer's attention relating to the possibility of sanction by the TUI in relation to nominations for election to the Academic Council and this has caused some confusion. The President outlined some options in relation to the timings associated with the running of the elections and sought opinion from the Governing Body in this regard. During the discussion the Governing Body re-affirmed its support of democratic and open staff elections. It was agreed that nominations for academic staff categories would be re-opened, noting that existing nominations would remain valid. It was also agreed that, if possible, elections for PMSS and Head of Department categories would proceed in line with the original timelines. The President indicated that this decision would be communicated to all university staff.

The Chairperson thanked the President for her updates.

3.

Executive Structures and proposed VPs:

NOTED Ms Sheridan and Mr O'Toole absented themselves from the meeting.

The President circulated a memorandum outlining a proposal for the assignment of existing Vice President roles to new Executive roles. She confirmed that all roles remain at existing grades and the process has been informed by legal advice and contractual obligations. The assignments have been agreed with the relevant individuals. Noting that the new Executive Structures had been approved previously by the Governing Body, the President now sought approval for the roles as follows;

- Vice President Governance/University Secretary – Ms Elaine Sheridan;
- Vice President Finance/Financial Controller – Mr Cormac O'Toole;
- Vice President Student Experience – Dr David Denieffe;
- Vice President Academic Affairs, Teaching & Learning – Dr Derek O'Byrne;
- Vice President Global Partnerships – Dr Patricia Mulcahy.

It was noted that the positions of VP Research, Innovation & Impact and VP People, Culture & EDI are currently under recruitment by open competition.

The Chairperson then proposed that the President's request for approval be accepted by the Governing Body, and this was agreed. The Chairperson and the Governing Body commended the President on reaching this significant milestone.

AGREED To approve new executive roles (5) as outlined above.

	Ms Sheridan and Mr O'Toole rejoined the meeting. The Chairperson on behalf of the Governing Body congratulated them on their new appointments and thanked them for their work carried out to date.
	NOTED The Chairperson apologised for not tending to this matter earlier in the meeting and took the opportunity to welcome Ms Adele Mahon, student member, to the Governing Body. Ms Mahon introduced herself to the Governing Body.
4.	<u>Report on progress of Strategic Plan:</u> NOTED Dr Hayes was welcomed to the meeting for the purpose of providing an update on progress of the Strategic Plan. He outlined the following; ▪ Project Governance: masterplan has been developed; activity owners assigned; aligned to the strategic risk register and EMT workplans; also aligned to the HEA Performance Agreement; ▪ Summary of actions completed, in progress or behind schedule (May to Dec 2023); ▪ KPI's – summary and breakdown of strategic objectives; ▪ Strategic Risk Register summary. A discussion ensued with regards to progress to date, recommended amendments to deadline dates for two strategic actions i.e. Apprentice strategy and Race Equality Action plan. There was also some discussion regarding enrolment statistics and non-progression rates whereby suggestions and advice were expressed by Governing Body members. The Chairperson thanked Dr Hayes for the update.
5.	<u>SETU Wexford Campus Strategy:</u> NOTED Dr Hayes remained present for this item. The President commenced the discussion by outlining opportunities and challenges for the development of the SETU campus in Wexford, a specified action in the Strategic plan, including potential design principles and thematic areas of focus. Both internal and external advisory groups have been established to assist in developing a suitable business plan with a view to presenting same to the Governing Body in Quarter 1 2024. Conversations with the HEA have also commenced in this regard. In considering the presentation provided, the Governing Body conveyed opinions and advice on the matter focusing on opportunities to build on what currently exists, including access routes, and new activities of relevance to the region, including innovation in offshore and renewable energy. The Chairperson thanked Dr Hayes and he left the meeting.
	The meeting took a short recess at this stage.
6.	<u>Action Plan for enrolment and retention:</u> NOTED Dr Denieffe and Dr O'Byrne joined the meeting. Dr O'Byrne commenced by outlining activities carried out to recruit students to study at SETU. These include career fairs, school outreach activities, online Chat platforms and "Try SETU " events. He also outlined a plan for 2024 to enhance recruitment, including an external review of the current portfolio by a career guidance professional. A new recruitment initiative is also being developed around a scheme to connect the "right student" with the "right programme" incorporating discipline specific additional points. Dr Denieffe continued by outlining a number of challenges in terms of student retention and areas of concern. He summarised a number of activities and models in place to encourage and support student retention which reinforce a sense of belonging and community. He also outlined a plan for 2024 to include new activities and to refresh current activities includes ongoing orientation and themed weeks; an online university-wide programme designed to support transition and retention; peer mentoring; student volunteering and tutor development. It was noted that further data is required including analysis of "Exit" interviews. Given the crucial importance of student recruitment and retention for SETU in achieving its mission, it was agreed that this information and data

	would be presented to the Governing Body in the coming months. The Chairperson thanked both for their updates. AGREED To keep the Governing Body informed of the progress of the Action Plan.
7.	<u>Update re. IT Integration project:</u> NOTED Dr Denieffe provided an update in relation to IT integration with a focus on operating systems. He outlined the process and engagement that has taken place to date including a review of the IT/IS programme by an external independent expert in this field. The summary recommendations to deliver a unitary IT function with common policies and architecture were presented. Dr Denieffe provided a status report of the current ICT integration project including timelines and completed tasks. He also indicated the ongoing work in relation to Cybersecurity, training and awareness and incident response. The Chairperson thanked Dr Denieffe for the comprehensive report. Dr Denieffe and Dr O’Byrne left the meeting.
8.	<u>Corporate Administration:</u> 8.1 <u>Policy approvals:</u> NOTED It was agreed to defer this item to the next meeting. 8.2 <u>Waterford Institute of Technology Financial Statements: 20 months to 30 April 2022:</u> <u>Institute of Technology Carlow Financial Statements: 8 months to 30 April 2022:</u> NOTED The Chairperson informed the Governing Body that the Finance & Capital Investments committee and Audit & Risk committee have conducted preliminary reviews of both sets of financial statements pre audit which are now due for submission to the Comptroller and Auditor General post audit. The Finance and Capital Investments committee have subsequently carried out a further review of same (ITC on 27th November and WIT on 5th December) and have recommended approval to submit. The Chairperson proposed to accept same on the basis of the recommendations of the Finance & Capital Investments committee. AGREED To approve and submit the following to the Comptroller and Auditor General; ▪ Waterford Institute of Technology Financial Statements: 20 months to 30 April 2022; ▪ Institute of Technology Carlow Financial Statements: 8 months to 30 April 2022. 8.3 <u>Final settlement for the Corporate Services building project:</u> NOTED Mr O’Toole in referring to minutes of the Finance & Capital Investments Committee (23rd Nov 2023) outlined details of a proposed settlement claim that has been reviewed and discussed in detail by the committee who have recommended that the settlement figure is accepted and approved by the Governing Body. AGREED To accept and approve the settlement figure as per recommendation from the Finance & Capital Investments Committee.
	<u>Academic Council:</u> NOTED Academic Council Minutes of 17th October 2023.
10.	<u>Minutes of GB Committees:</u> NOTED Policy Review Group draft minutes of 22nd November 2023. NOTED Finance & Capital Investments committee draft minutes of 23rd November 2023.

11.

AOB:

There being no other business to attend to the Chairperson thanked all wishing them a Happy Christmas and closed the meeting at 5.50pm.

Approved: 16th January 2024

Mr. Jim Bergin, Deputy Chairperson