

## **Minutes of the 31<sup>st</sup> Governing Body meeting**

- Date:** Tuesday, 21<sup>st</sup> January 2025
- Time:** 3.00pm – 6.30pm, Haughton Building Boardroom,  
Carlow Campus
- Chairperson:** Professor Patrick Prendergast
- Attendees:** Professor Veronica Campbell  
Mr Jim Bergin  
Ms Ruth Beadle (via MS Teams)  
Ms Louise Grubb (via MS Teams)  
Dr David Dempsey  
Mr Mark Dunne (via MS Teams)  
Mr Richard Lacey  
Ms Pauline Oakes  
Professor Marie-Christine Ho Ba Tho (via MS Teams)  
Mr Derek Sheridan  
Ms Trish Finegan (via MS Teams)  
Dr Greg Doyle  
Dr Zeta Dooly
- Apologies:** Ms Eileen Curtis  
Mr Kevin Lewis  
Ms Louise Walsh
- In attendance under the Code of Governance:**  
Ms Elaine Sheridan, VP Governance /University Secretary
- In attendance for Agenda Items 3**  
Mr David Denieffe, VP Student Experience  
Mr Tony Miller, Director of ICT (via MS Teams)
- In attendance for Agenda Item 4**  
Mr Brian Foley, PMO Programme Director  
Dr David Ryan, Assoc. VP Sustainably  
Ms Lynne Whelan, Change Management Professional
- In attendance for Agenda Item 5**  
Dr Allison Kenneally, VP Equality, Diversity & Inclusion
- Secretariat:** Ms Annette Byrne

1. Chairperson's Opening:

NOTED The Chairperson welcomed all to the meeting. He outlined a proposed format for the meeting with HEA representatives and referred to a structured paper circulated to all the previous day.

He then welcomed Dr Alan Wall, Chief Executive, Ms Orla Nugent, Deputy CEO and Ms Pearl Cunningham, Head of Finance to the meeting and brief introductions were provided by all attendees. Dr Wall commenced by referring to HEA Act 2022 and the changes this has brought to the regulatory role of the HEA. He also indicated that he is not aware of any concerns or issues regarding the governance of SETU. In acknowledging challenges in terms of funding, Dr Wall highlighted the importance of the Performance Agreement. Ms Cunningham commended the good working relationship between the HEA and SETU on all financial matters and mentioned that a draft Borrowing Framework for TU's has been provided to the Department, and that providing the TU sector with the ability to borrow has been included in the Programme for Government. The Governing Body raised the following matters with the HEA for discussion;

- Expressed gratitude in relation to recent approval of senior Executive roles notwithstanding the delay and concern at the pace of approval;
- Clarification regarding funding for specific capital infrastructure;
- Clarification regarding the provision of funding for capital projects regarding the SETU's campus in Wexford. Dr Wall indicated that he would consult further with the Head of Capital Funding in this regard;
- Emphasised the requirement to expediate the development of student accommodation;
- Welcomed the allocation of Pharmacy and Veterinary programmes at SETU and again stressed the importance of adequate funding to support this;
- Emphasised the role of research in the university and the need to further improve and progress in this area.

The Chairperson thanked all for their input. Dr Wall expressed his gratitude for the opportunity to meet and he along with Ms Nugent and Ms Cunningham left the meeting.

1.1

Welcome & approval of Agenda

NOTED The Chairperson recapped briefly on some of the interactions between the HEA and Governing Body and confirming the meeting was quorate and with approval of the agenda he commenced the normal business at 4.20pm. Apologies submitted for this meeting were noted.

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 present declared a conflict for this meeting.

1.3

Approval of minutes

AGREED To approve the minutes of 26<sup>th</sup> November and to publish on the website.

AGREED To approve the minutes of 19<sup>th</sup> December and to publish on the website.

1.4

Committee/Membership appointments:

NOTED The Chairperson outlined the following recommendation for appointment to committees of the Governing Body indicating that all have confirmed their willingness to serve;

- Eileen Curtis to the *Audit and Risk Committee*
- Greg Doyle to the *Policy Committee*
- Zeta Dooly to the *Joint Quality Committee*

- Derek Sheridan to the *EDI Committee*
- Louise Walsh to the *Finance and Capital Investment Committee*

AGREED To approve all as outlined above.

1.5

Matters arising (Action Log)

NOTED The Chairperson indicated that matters, as noted on the Action Log, are in hand. There were no other matters arising.

2.

**Report from President:**

NOTED In the interest of time, it was proposed that the President's report is taken as read.

3.

**Update on recovery from Cyber-attack:**

NOTED Mr Denieffe and Mr Miller were welcomed to the meeting. Mr Denieffe commenced by outlining details of post investigation completion and findings to inform the rebuild and recovery phase. It was noted that there have been many positive developments which continue to be progressed along with business continuity planning. Mr Denieffe also provided a full schedule of timelines for full recovery and rebuild which includes the development of a dedicated Cyber Security Unit; the auditing and development of policies, procedures and guidelines; ongoing staff training and awareness and the transition to Cloud based storage and applications. Mr Miller provided assurance that, as of yet, there has been no evidence of data infiltration or data breaches. There was some concern expressed regarding the impact the incident has had on student learning, staff and the reputation of the university. Notwithstanding the risks and challenges that exist, the Governing Body was reassured that there is ongoing communication and webinars provided for the staff and student communities to assist in addressing concerns. The Chairperson thanked Mr Denieffe and Mr Miller for their update and they left the meeting.

4.

**SETU Integration & capacity building projects / TSAF:**

NOTED Mr Foley, Ms Whelan and Dr Ryan were welcomed to the meeting. Mr Foley commenced by presenting details of the merger and integration projects spanning a four-year period, the deliverables completed and achievements in establishing a new university for the region. He also outlined details of the merger and integration plan, as well as the comprehensive programme of work carried out and highlighted that the provision of dedicated multi-annual funding enables the continuity of the programme of work as aligned to the Strategic Plan of the University. Dr Ryan continued by providing detail on the Technological Sector Advancement Fund (TSAF), timelines, objectives, associated work packages, thematic areas and deliverables. He also advised of the status of actions highlighting that monitoring and progress of same is conducted on a regular basis and reported to the HEA, as required. Ms Whelan presented details of the ongoing work in relation to the change management and transformation programme outlining the process of Academic and PMSS restructuring facilitated through a series of workshops and activities. She also outlined other staff engagements and communications such as PULSE survey, Think Tanks, Staff briefings and Change Network Programme. The Governing Body extended their appreciation to all for the progress and work that is ongoing in this regard. The Chairperson thanked Mr Foley, Ms Whelan and Dr Ryan for their updates and the left the meeting. A brief discussion ensued whereby Governing Body members discussed resistance towards change, the President indicated that there is significant engagement in general throughout the University which has been validated during the recent CINNTE institutional review.

ACTION It was suggested that in order to provide a deeper understanding of challenges that remain it would be beneficial to keep the Governing Body informed on this matter and to invite the PMO team to Governing Body in approximately six months' time for a progress update.

Prof Ho Ba Tho left the meeting at 5.35pm.

**5. Strategic Discussion:**

SETU Athena Swan Bronze Award application

NOTED Dr Kenneally was welcomed to the meeting. She commenced by providing strategic context to the Gender Equality Framework noting the legacy awards previously obtained and explained the requirement to now submit an application in order to obtain a new Athena Swan Bronze Award for SETU in order to continue and build on the work carried out to date. Dr Kenneally outlined the following:

- Work of the Self-Assessment Team (SAT) regarding EDI matters across the university;
- Completion of staff surveys; analysis and outputs;
- Survey feedback and key action points that are linked and aligned to the Strategic Plan of the University;
- Provision of key statistics regarding gender breakdown across staff categories;
- Athens Swan priorities, key issues relating to gender equality and other equality matters;
- Actions prioritised in the application to address key issues;
- Implementation plan and next steps;
- Details of costings associated with implementing actions over a five-year period.

Dr Kennelly then requested approval from the Governing Body to submit the application for evaluation. As Chairperson of the EDI Committee, Ms Beadle extended her gratitude to all involved for their work and support in the submission.

AGREED To approve the submission of the application as presented. The Chairperson thanked Dr Kenneally and all involved for their ongoing work in this regard. Dr Kenneally left the meeting at this point.

Ms Grubb left the meeting at 6pm.

**6. Governance Matters:**

**6.1 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;

- Export Control Policy;
- Open Research Policy;
- Hospitality & Entertainment Policy;
- Protected Disclosure Policy

AGREED To approve the above policies and to upload to the website.

**6.2 HEA Oversight Agreement 2025**

AGREED To note the contents of and approve the HEA Oversight Agreement 2025 as presented.

**7. Academic Council:**

NOTED Academic Council Minutes for 12<sup>th</sup> December 2024.

**8. Minutes of GB Committees:**

**8.1** NOTED Audit & Risk Committee draft minutes of 19<sup>th</sup> December 2024. Dr Dempsey indicated that by request of the Audit & Risk Committee members, the Cash Handling review has been forwarded to Human Resources for consideration.

8.2	NOTED Policy Committee draft minutes of 9 <sup>th</sup> January 2025.
	<p><b>SECTION B:</b></p> <p>B1. AGREED To accept and approve request to award Emeritus titles to retired staff members of SETU as per the list provided.</p> <p>B2. AGREED Noted and agreed to approve minor amendments to Terms of Reference for the Finance and Capital Investments Committee and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee as presented.</p> <p>B3. NOTED Details regarding an external review of Governing Body effectiveness.</p> <p>B4. NOTED Governance training plan for Governing Body members in February 2025.</p> <p>B5. NOTED Correspondence from the Chairperson to Minister O'Donovan, Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science dated 26 November 2024.</p>
9.	<p><b>AOB:</b></p> <p>There being no other business to attend to the Chairperson thanked all and closed the meeting at 6.15pm.</p> <p>The Chairperson indicated that he had arranged to conduct a private meeting of external Governing Body members at this point. He noted that, under the Interim Code of Governance, such a meeting is required to be held biannually. The President, University Secretary, Secretariat and Governing Body staff members excused themselves from the meeting.</p>



Approved: \_\_\_\_\_  
Chairperson

Date: 25<sup>th</sup> February 2025