



HARTPURY

Minutes of the Meetings of Hartpury University and Hartpury College Boards 10am Wednesday 18th March 2026 Worcester University

Members

Edward Keene
Alison Blackburn
Patrick Brooke
Robert Brooks
Gareth Smith
Barbara Buck -
Andy Collop (Professor)
Alastair Grizzell
Ben Thomas
Mary Heslop
Henry Hodgkins
Thomas Legge
Melissa Orritt
William Marshall
Chris Moody
Bill Meredith
Lucie Hammond
Ian Robinson (Professor)
Sue Blake
Rose Stephenson
Helen Wilkinson
Fiona Reece

In Attendance

Mick Axtell
Rosie Scott-Ward
Gillian Steels
Claire Whitworth
Lesley Worsfold

University Board

Present (Chair)
Present (Co-opted Governor)
-
Apologies
Present (HE Student Governor)
-
Present (Vice-Chancellor)
-
-
Present
Apologies (HE Staff Governor)
-
Present
Present
-
Present
Present (Vice-Chair)
Present (from 10.10am)
-
Present

College Board

Present (Chair)
-
Present
-
Present
Present (Executive Principal)
Present (Vice-Chair)
Apologies (FE Student Governor)
Present
-
-
Apologies (FE Staff Governor)
-
Present
Present
-
-
Present
-
Present
-
Present (Chief Operating Officer)
-
Present (Clerk to the Board)
Present (College Principal)
Present (Chief People Officer)

		ACTION & ACTION DATE
01/03/26	Welcome	
	Apologies and Confirmation of Quoracy Apologies as detailed above. It was confirmed the meetings of the University Board and the College Board were quorate.	
02/03/26	Declaration of Interest	
	The Clerk advised that members' interests would be taken as those disclosed in the Register of Members Interests.	

	Standing Interests – Chair, Vice-Chancellor/Principal and Chris Moody members of both University and College Boards.	
03/03/26	Minutes of the meetings The Minutes of the University Board and the College Board meetings held on the 19th November 2025 were agreed by the respective Boards to be true and accurate records. The Minutes of the Meeting of the FE Board 4th February 2026 were agreed to be true and accurate records.	
04/03/26	Matters Arising An action log had been provided updating on issues raised at previous meetings. The update was NOTED.	
05/03/26	Vice-Chancellor and Executive Principal Update	
	The Vice-Chancellor and Executive Principal gave a briefing which covered the External environment, Hartpury highlights & updates, Charity challenge.	
	Spending on Education 2025/26 – highlighted:	
	• £122bn in 24/25 (10% fall since 10/11 – HE driven) • 4.1% of national income down from 5.6% in 10/11 • Falling numbers in primary schools growing numbers in post-16 education • Spending on SEND doubled over last decade (~ £6bn gap in funding and spending by 28/29) • FE funding/student 8% lower in 25/26 cf 10/11 (was 14% between 19/20 and 10/11) • HE funding/student 22% lower in 24/25 cf 12/13 • Long-term balance between public and private contributions to HE funding remains contested	
	College Funding	
	• Active choices from DfE which shift funding towards FE and technical activity • DfE 16-18 budget up £1.2bn (15%) 2025-2028 to fund rising numbers & maintain funding rates • C. £590m increase to 16-18 budget (c. £8bn) for 25/26 - headline rate now £5,105 - 27.6% higher than 5-years ago • 3% uplift for 26/27 signalled - not yet translated into funding rates • £570m post-16 (65%) & construction skills (35%) capacity funding 2026-2030 - £283m through Strategic Authorities, £287m through national bidding round – it was highlighted that Hartpury was developing an option to submit for this funding in line with the Hartpury Strategy. 10.10am Rose Stephenson joined the meeting.	
	University Funding	
	• Continues to be extremely challenging • SPG reduced by £108m in 25/26 – continued pressure likely (high-cost subjects, degree apprenticeships, WP, ...) • Continued pressure on Research Council funding	

	45% of sector likely to report deficit in 25/26 (OfS) It was recognised that government funding challenges meant that funding in FE and HE was unlikely to see a significant increase. It was noted that funding on FE had seen some increases, reflecting the government's increased focus on skills, whilst HE funding continued to flatline. Governors reflected on ongoing negative press coverage on the value of degrees and levels of student loan repayments. The issues around the interest rate for Plan 2 student loans were noted. The difficulty of ensuring the value of HE to the UK was recognised was discussed.	
	Reformed 16 – 19 Qualifications	
	- Consultation outcome published by DfE last week - Introduction of V Levels (same size as A Levels) from 27/28 - Further improvements to T Levels (only large study programme in reformed landscape) – new T Levels to be introduced (sport, equine?) 2 new pathways at Level 2 (Further Study or Occupational) - Funding to be removed from legacy vocational & technical Level 3 qualifications (not in 26/27 as previously stated)	
	V-Levels	
	- New flagship vocational qualification to sit alongside A Levels and T Levels 360 guided learning hours only, to allow for V-level & A Level combinations - Linked to occupational standards - Increased proportion of non-exam element compared to A Levels 28/29: Sport ... (Level 2 + V Level + T Level) 29/30: Agriculture, Environment & Animal Care (Level 2 + V Level); Protective Services (T Level) - Strategic transition planning statement required by mid-June 2026! Hartpury was considering these developments carefully and a draft Strategic transition planning statement would be brought to FE QuEst in June. It was emphasised that with the new qualification landscape and the new OFSTED Framework this was an unprecedented period of change for FE.	FE Quest June 26
	Technical Excellence Colleges (TECs)	
	- Applications open for Wave 2 of TECs programme - Clean Energy (5 TECs) - Advanced Manufacturing (4 TECs) - Digital and Technologies (5 TECs) - Defence (5 TECs) - Joined bids led by Gloucestershire College ("Super Spoke") - Advanced Manufacturing & Digital & Technologies and expressed interest with other potential partners. It was noted that the outcomes known in Spring and updated to Board.	May 2026
	UK's International Education Strategy	
	3 core ambitions:	

	1. Increase the UK's international standing through education 2. Continue to sustainably recruit high-qualify international students 3. Collectively grow education exports to £40bn/year by 2030 • Strategy co-owned by DfE, DBT & FCDO • Grow education exports to £40bn/year by 2030 from £32.3bn/year in 2022 (HE - £23.7bn, TNE - £3bn) • Expand access to UK education through TNE • Maintaining a globally competitive offer (aligned with UK immigration & skills priorities) • Make UK qualifications the global benchmark Potential opportunities were reflected on.	
	Hartpury Highlights & Updates Animal Welfare's Dog of the Year 2025 - Henry Hedgehog & conservation research Land-Based & Environment Learner Awards Christmas Lecture King's New Year Honours for former Hartpury students Six Nations - 19 current & former students selected for Six Nations Senior & U20s men's squads Women's BUCS Super League Champions 4th consecutive season EDI Celebration Month - Unreflected Reflections - Collaborative project launch (UKRI) Premiere of 4th film – opportunity to reach wider range of communities than usual at Hartpury. GuildHE Annual Conference - 21st & 22nd October 2026 at Hartpury following successful bid. Women in Sport Event - 16th March at House of Commons – positive event with MPs and business well represented – raised profile Hartpury – more events planned. Salary Sacrifice Schemes – sustainability focus	
	3Day Charity Challenge– Cycle St Davids to Hartpury - to support Goals Beyond Grass (GBG) Bikes – approximately 30 participants. Governors queried if there were any issues at Hartpury in relation to meningitis. The Chief People Officer advised that staff and students had been briefed on symptoms and actions if necessary. There were no cases at Hartpury. A governor commented on recent national press reporting on students on degree courses without any A'levels and queried the position at Hartpury. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor advised that Hartpury had a small number of mature students in this cohort who were studying HE access programmes. The Vice-Chancellor and Executive Principal's Update was NOTED.	
07/03/26	Finance Pack (Monthly Accounts) – January 2026	
	The finance pack summarised performance for the first six months of the financial year. The Group reported a net operating surplus of £1.5m against a reforecast surplus of £996k, delivering a favourable variance of £541k.	

Following completion of the reforecasting exercise, the Group now anticipated a year-end surplus of £1.9m, compared with the original budgeted surplus of £2.3m. It was highlighted that in this pack, and in future reporting, actual performance would be measured against the reforecast rather than the original budget.

Variances were outlined and the background explained.

It was confirmed that there were currently no covenant concerns – now or expected.

It was noted that the Department for Education (DfE) audit of the Residential Bursary Fund had concluded since the last report, with only minor recommendations raised.

The Key Performance Indicators were detailed in the report and considered at the meeting.

The Boards NOTED the January Financial Pack.

08/03/26 FE Report

The report provided a high-level overview of progress made with key areas of development for Hartpury College, confirmed recruitment data for 2025-2026 and to provide an overview of recent updates to policy and the external environment.

POLICY / EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT: the external environment continues to evolve and the key areas of focus for us included:

1. Further Ofsted updates
2. Technical Education Colleges
3. Qualification Review & 'V Levels' consultation
4. Schools White Paper, February 2026

A lot of work was ongoing to respond to curriculum changes. Placements within some subject areas within the T'level would be more challenging. A governor commented that the placement requirements for sport T'levels would need to be made clear to employers already providing placements for university students to ensure that there was a clear understanding of Hartpury's University and College offer. Funding information was awaited for new qualifications, including the V'levels.

Governors recognised the unprecedented level of change in the sector in relation to the curriculum and commented on the challenges of explaining the new curriculum landscape to parents and young people. The College Principal advised work was being done with marketing to try to ensure the offer was clear.

Governors expressed disappointment that FE funding was not being maintained in real terms by the government, and reflected on the increasing gap between lecturer and schoolteacher pay.

RECRUITMENT: overall applications were lower than the same time last year and have been tracking in a similar position all year, albeit the gap has narrowed as the year has progressed. Acceptances are up on the same point last year, although the change in selection process and increased speed of offer will have impacted this favourably so this could be seen as a false positive. The focus is on conversion of offer to acceptance and

acceptance to enrolment to ensure we meet our overall target in September.

Enrolment for 2025/26 was confirmed as Hartpury's largest cohort to date, 2061 students, including 99 apprentices.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT: we continue to drive forward further improvements as reflected throughout the report, focusing on our Quality Improvement Plan actions and in development of our practices through the lens of the renewed Ofsted inspection approach, which has an enhanced focus on inclusion for all. It was confirmed that Hartpury was reviewing OFSTED reports from colleges inspected under the new framework to gain greater insight. It was noted that more data was required for inspections, to be able to demonstrate the impact of the college on enabling all to thrive and flourish. Hartpury was refining information held within its IT systems to support this process. Ofsted grades were based on "secure fit", with grade headings revised, such that a previous grade of "good" was equivalent to "meets expectations".

B'tec exam results were expected 19th March.

Maths and English November GCSE resits had been lower than previously, and there had been some issues on maintaining momentum for students once they had sat the exams. A review was ongoing on the approach for resits in 2027/28.

It was highlighted that Animal T'level was progressing well. There were some challenges in agriculture which were being worked through.

The College Principal highlighted the addition of the Inclusion section within the report, and confirmed that this was being incorporated across all relevant reports within college reporting.

Accountability Statement – Hartpury was on track to achieve its 2025/26 commitments, and the 2026/27 Accountability Statement was now being developed. New guidance had been issued by DfE in January which decoupled the Accountability Statement from the funding agreement.

The FE Report was NOTED.

The Board thanked the Team for their work.

09/03/26 HE Report

Current student numbers were in line with expectations (in relation to headcount and income), as were recruitment predictions for next academic year. International was an ongoing challenge, with a team focus on continuing to attract students who will benefit from Hartpury's USP's.

Academic Partnership activity was significant at this time, with a review of our UWE partnership agreement and activity related to new partnership opportunities.

The new OfS regulation tighter controls of subcontractual courses, which would come into

	effect from 31/3/26, were highlighted. Research and Knowledge exchange team had been required to pick back up the REF (Research Excellence Framework) agenda following it being 'unpaused', while also maintaining day to day related activities. Some real successes with the Christmas lecture and other public engagement events. An update was provided relating to activity of the Academic Registry. The recent positive 'soft launch' of the University Learning HUB was highlighted, noting the official opening would take place in due course. It was in use 7 days a week. Graze income had not been affected by ULH catering.	
	The HE Report was NOTED. The Board thanked the Team for their work.	
10/03/26	Research Excellence Framework 2029: Code of Practice The report outlined that to participate in the next Research Excellence Framework (REF2029) institutions must have their REF Code of Practice approved. The REF Code of Practice was a separate document to the Hartpury Research Code of Practice and outlined our approach to the following for REF2029: 1. How the university determines which staff have "significant responsibility for research" and who qualifies as an "independent researcher", 2. The fair process for choosing which research outputs (e.g., books, papers, datasets) to include in the submission, 3. Unit of Assessment (UoA) Allocation: How staff and outputs are assigned to specific Units of Assessment (UoAs). 4. Equality and Inclusion: How the institution ensures that protected groups (based on age, disability, race, etc.) do not suffer disadvantage during the selection process. To comply with point 4, we were also required to submit an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) along with the Code of Practice (Appendix 1). The pausing and subsequent removal of previous opportunities to submit the Code of Practice, left us (and most of the sector) with the 11th May 2026 as the deadline to submit. However, because of the level of scrutiny and sign off required, we have worked quickly to this schedule; Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee 28-01-26 (approved), Staff Forum 03-02-26 (approved), EDI Forum 09-02-26 (approved), Academic Board 11-02-26 (approved), QuEst 26-02-26 (approved) prior to this Board.	
	The University Board: APPROVED the REF2029 Code of Practice for submission, and APPROVED the REF2029 Code of Practice Equality Impact Assessment for submission.	
11/03/26	Student & Staff Voice Student Governors HE Student Governor – ULH had been very positively received. Floods – daily communications would be helpful. Catering – Aramark recent engagement positively received. HE Staff Governor - ULH creating strong University vibe – welcomed by staff & students and applicants.	

	○ New Structure – creating clearer identities ○ Student voice work ongoing ○ Competition – staff highlighting the challenges from other institutions recruiting practices ○ AI use– opportunities and challenges for students highlighted – it was recognised this was a challenge all institutions were adjusting to – the need to ring fence assessment, define acceptable use clearly and increase understanding of effective ways to harness use was recognised. It was confirmed the AI Working Group had issued guidelines and was continuing to work on this. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor commented that the aim was to support student development and protect academic integrity. FE Staff Governor – AI – issues above echoed and the need to build digital skills emphasised - ULH – welcomed - OFSTED – support and training on inclusion and neurodiversity welcomed - Work placements – some challenges Governor Link Activity – the following visits had taken place: Ian Robinson – Sustainability - 13 & 30 Jan 26 Helen Wilkinson – Agriculture Jan Chris Moody – Veterinary Nursing – Nov, Jan Barbara Buck – A'levels & Access to HE – Oct, Nov, Dec & Feb Mary Heslop – EDI – Feb 26 Rose Stephenson – SU No issues raised re safeguarding Staff Morale – positive feedback generally Strategic Issues were highlighted. The Chair continued his routine meetings with the Clerk and Vice-Chancellor over the summer. It was noted that involvement in the link governor scheme helped to triangulate the information provided at the meetings.	
12/03/26	Strategy Finance and Resources Committee Minutes of the meeting 4th February 26 Key Issues/Decisions were highlighted: 2025/26 Reforecast, release of contingency Ongoing Sustainability focus on utility costs Bad Debt Write off and new processes Financial Regulations Update Banking & Borrowing Update – processes in place to ensure transparency of Revolving Credit Facility draw down levels in the Finance Pack	
	Policy Update Approved Under Delegated Authority: Sustainability Update Report Financial Regulations Annual Insurance Report	

	Slavery & Human Trafficking Statement The SFR Committee Minutes and Update were NOTED.	
13/03/26	QuEST Committees HE Quest Committee - Minutes of the meeting 26th February 26 Key Items: HE Update: • TEF – noted less opportunity for narrative and greater focus on data • Partnerships 2030 Strategy TNE – being investigated – subject of discussion for strategy sessions. RKE: • REF Update • KEF Update • REF Code of Practice – Approved to be APPROVED by Board • UWE Renewal of Agreement Review of Student Protection Plan – to ensure meets requirement of international partnerships. The HE Quest Minutes and Update were NOTED.	
	FE Quest Committee - Minutes of the meeting 26th February 26 Key Items: SEND and Inclusion processes in Aspire and Employment, Skills and Careers. Numbers of student in inclusion categories – very helpful presentation – recommended for all to see. Quality of Teaching, Learning and Assessment Update Report (including update on staff wellbeing and student inclusivity) and Landex Report A'levels – Yr1 and Yr 2 highlighting performing below 2024/25 results, Btec and T'level position for years 1 &2- particularly positive progress for animal T'level introduction. Addition of informal reporting of complaints. The FE Quest Minutes and Update were NOTED.	
14/03/26	Audit and Risk Management Committee - Minutes of the meeting 10th March 2026 Key Issues highlighted: Annual Health & Safety Report Approved– steady state. Business Recovery Incident Report – wider lessons learnt to resolve incidents more quickly. Annual Value for Money Report Approved – wider remit to be considered for 2025/26 reporting. Risk Management Report – Risks impacted on achievement of Strategy added to Strategic Risks Register. Public Interest Disclosure Policy – Approved. Annual IT & Cyber Report Approved – ongoing assurance – recognising always need for further action. Risk Update - NOTED Approved Under Delegated Authority: Annual Health & Safety Report	

	Annual Value for Money Report Annual Cyber & IT Report Public Interest Disclosure Policy	
	The A&RMC Minutes and Update were NOTED	
15/03/26	Application of the Seal - none	
16/03/26	Any Other Business None	
	The meeting closed at 12.15pm	