



HARTPURY

Minutes of the Meetings of Hartpury University and Hartpury College Boards 10 am Wednesday 14th May 2025 Equine, Hartpury

Members

Edward Keene
Alison Blackburn
Patrick Brooke
Robert Brooks
Lamees Nazir
Barbara Buck -
Andy Collop (Professor)
Alastair Grizzell
Ella Smith
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
Hannah Lennon

University Board

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

College Board

Present (Chair)
-
Apologies

Present (Vice-Chair)
Present (Principal)
Present
Apologies (FE Student Governor)
Present
-
-
Apologies (FE Staff Governor)
-
Present
Present
-
-
Present
-
Apologies

Present (Chief Operating Officer)
-
Present (Clerk to the Board)
Present (Deputy-Principal Further Education)
Present (Deputy-Principal Resources)
Deputy FE Student Governor – Present

		ACTION & ACTION DATE
01/05/25	Welcome The Chair welcomed attendees to the meeting. Apologies and Confirmation of Quoracy Apologies as detailed above. It was confirmed the meetings of the University Board and the College Board were quorate.	
02/05/25	Declaration of Interest The Clerk advised that members' interests would be taken as those disclosed in the	

	<p>Register of Members Interests.</p> <p>Standing Interests – Chair, Vice-Chancellor/Principal and Chris Moody members of both University and College Boards</p>	
03/05/25	<p>Minutes of the meetings</p> <p>The Minutes of the University Board and the College Board meetings held on the 19th March 2025 were agreed by the respective Boards to be true and accurate records.</p> <p>The Minutes of the College Board meeting held on the 6th May 2025 were agreed by the College Board to be a true and accurate record.</p> <p>The Notes from the March Strategy Days were NOTED.</p>	
04/05/25	<p>Matters Arising</p> <p>An action log had been provided updating on issues raised at previous meetings.</p> <p>Management Account Training – this would take place before the next Board meeting.</p> <p>Hartpury FC – had won the league and the cup.</p> <p>Management Account Metrics – updated to show liquidity days.</p> <p>KPIs incorporated in the budget - to be further reviewed following Management Account training.</p> <p>Cash generation target – this had been discussed at SFR and would be part of the budget discussions in July.</p> <p>The update was NOTED.</p>	
	Part 1 Priority Agenda Items	
05/03/25	<p>Vice-Chancellor and Principal's Update</p> <p>The Vice-Chancellor and Principal provided a presentation which covered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • External environment • Hartpury highlights • 	
1.	<p>External environment</p> <p>The following key developments, and their implications for Hartpury were highlighted by the Vice-Chancellor and Principal, and their impact reflected on by the Boards. it was recognised this remained a challenging financial period.</p> <p>College</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £300m funding package in autumn budget: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ £50m towards staff pay rises (June 25) - £160k for Hartpury ➢ £250m to go towards funding 3.78% increase in 16-19 funding rates for 25/26 • £302m College capital allocation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ £2.1m for Hartpury College (June 25) ➢ Must be spent on college assets by 2028 – it was possible long leases might be required to meet the DfE requirements for funding to be spent on college assets. Discussions were planned with DfE recognising that Hartpury's structure had been approved by it. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NAHT legal action against Ofsted's new plans – inadequate consultation & impact on staff mental health. Trials were ongoing for the proposed regime. • FE Commissioner's report on Weston College published highlighting shortcomings in governance – a paper on the detail of this had been provided. The detail of processes Hartpury had in place already were detailed and these were to be discussed at the relevant Committees during June/November to identify if any additional actions were required. 	
	<p>University –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Restoring Control over the Immigration System” – Government White Paper <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ 2-year graduate visa reduced to 18-months ➢ Exploring levy on providers ➢ BCA metrics tightened by 5pp (95% enrolment rate, 90% completion rate, 5% visa refusal rate) ➢ Sponsors to sign up to Agent Quality Framework ➢ Sponsors consider local impacts <p>The impact of these changes was not yet known. The changes to metrics could be challenging given the small numbers of international students at Hartpury which meant that a small number of students could impact these. Governors queried if there were any implication for staff recruitment, and were advised that Hartpury did not recruit staff through agencies.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OfS latest assessment of sector finances: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ 43% forecasting deficit for 24/25 ➢ Student recruitment most material driver: +26% (Home) & +19.5% (Int.) between 23/24 & 27/28! ➢ Many providers are taking steps to manage their finances, (reducing costs etc – many through redundancy programmes.) ➢ Likely to be “chunky” funding cuts for 25/26? <p>It was recognised it was a challenging time for the sector.</p> <p>A capital round was expected shortly, Hartpury intended to bid in this.</p>	
2.	<p>Hartpury Highlights</p> <p>Dual Accreditation Chartered Management Institute New Sponsor for Agri-Tech Centre Hartpury College Netball - “Quad” Winners for Second Year Hartpury FC - Hellenic League Champions & Marsh Challenge Cup Winners BUCS Super Rugby Champions New G-H Head of Rugby - Dan Murphy Smart Farming Hub - 16th June Official Opening Countryfile on farm Executive Away Day – Reaseheath – tour of facilities, update on sector – focus on skills agenda. Taking forward strategy KPI development. Interesting to see animal facilities as part of Hartpury's considerations. Governors queried the impact of Hartpury's current facilities. The Vice-Chancellor and Principal advised it impacted both college and university recruitment in animal, although there were other factors.</p> <p>Refreshed Executive</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Steve Draper (Academic Dean - RKE) • Jason Smerdon (Director of Finance) • Francesca Fryer (Interim Director of Estates) <p>Skills Landscape</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong focus from new Labour government on skills & jobs • Local & national agenda • Devolution, Unitary Authority, Combined Authority, Mayoral Authority – vehicle for 	

	<p>future funding?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding likely to align with national/local priorities? • Desire to get Universities & Colleges working more closely together <p>The Executive had reflected on the implications for Hartpury and the ways Hartpury could ensure its curriculum was better aligned to the skills agenda. Options being considered were e-sport and validation by Hartpury. These would be further explored.</p> <p>Moreton Morell College Visit – in financial intervention but no borrowing. Interesting discussions on group structures and visit to animal facilities</p> <p>Confidential Item – 3 years – Commercial sensitivity</p>	
	The Update was NOTED.	
06/03/25	Confidential Item - Commercial Sensitivity 3 years	
07/05/25	<p>Management Accounts – March 25</p> <p>The Accounts provided an update on the financial position of the University Group and enabled the Boards to monitor whether financial performance was on track and gain assurance on any areas of potential concern. It was highlighted that the operating result for the eight months ending March 2025 was a surplus of £1,996K compared to a budgeted surplus of £24K. Surplus was ahead of budget due to a combination of higher revenue (a record number of students at enrolment and the mix of courses), some Research Income carried forward from last year and a focus on cost control.</p> <p>It was noted that Cash balances at the month end totalled £981K. The University had an overdraft facility of £1m that it did not anticipate using in the current financial year. The University complied with its bank covenants and was forecast to continue to do so.</p> <p>It was outlined that the high-level reforecast shows a projected surplus of £1,670k compared to an original budget of £488k. Key changes include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good student retention in Higher Education. • Announcement from the ESFA regarding further in-year funding for T-levels and for higher student numbers generally. • Impact of the January 2025 pay award. • A better understanding of the move to outsource catering to Aramark • Full year impact of Zeelo contract for the transport provision <p>The KPI's were also provided.</p> <p>The Boards considered the increased utility costs and requested more information on actions being taken to reduce these going forward. The Chief Operating Officer advised that actions were being taken to better understand usage, with plans to put meters in each building to support this. It was confirmed that use of renewables was also being considered.</p> <p>Governors challenged on cash management – recognising the peaks and troughs due to the SLC profiling. The Chief Operating Officer advised that Aramark continued to move them away from Hartpury systems (until recently Aramark had still been using Hartpury tills).</p>	

	Confidential Item – Commercial Sensitivity – 2 years	
	The University Board and College Board NOTED the Management Accounts.	
08/05/25	HE Report	
	The Deputy Vice-Chancellor highlighted key aspects within her report.	
	<p>Student recruitment overall student recruitment was largely on target for next academic year. Currently Hartpury was tracking 11% up on applicants against the sector 5.9%. Agriculture, sport, equine and Veterinary Nursing were tracking up, although not to the same extent as previous years. Work to convert applications to enrolments was ongoing. Animal applicants continued to be below target. The next few months would be critical for both postgraduate and international, which were receiving significant focus.</p> <p>Governors questioned the likely impact of the proposed visa changes highlighted by the Vice-Chancellor earlier in the meeting. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor advised that the planned changes were to be modelled. Given Hartpury's international numbers were small the metrics could be impacted by a small number of students. The International Strategy Group would look at this in more detail and the Board updated.</p> <p>Student retention continued to align to last year's strong performance. Governors challenged on whether monitoring was being kept up to date in this important area. It was confirmed that data for recruitment and retention was being monitored on a monthly basis so that corrective action could be targeted as necessary. It was noted that ongoing reporting challenging the value of obtaining a degree made it a difficult recruiting back drop. It was planned to emphasise the civic role of universities going forward.</p> <p>Governors asked what key reasons were for leaving and were advised that leaving for employment options had slowed and that currently the main issues cited were finance or identifying it was not the preferred course. Governors queried how withdrawal impacted financially and were advised that it depended on the withdrawal point.</p> <p>Governors raised the issue of the declining demographics in 2028 and questioned if Hartpury was modelling this. It was confirmed this was incorporated in the 5-year strategy. It was also flagged that previously when the demographics had fallen Hartpury recruitment had increased. The need to ensure Hartpury's brand value and USPs were clearly understood by potential students.</p> <p>Governors queried areas of challenge and opportunity identified as part of this. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor advised that the completion of ULH and the development of animal facilities remained key areas for focus.</p> <p>Curriculum developments continued to be a focus, with 2026 new provision working its way through curriculum development.</p> <p>Research and knowledge exchange update - demonstrated the ongoing progress.</p> <p>Quality Assurance and Enhancement continued to be a critical focus, both internally and externally. The Office for Students (OfS) was committed to evolving how quality assurance was monitored and is working on new approaches which are highly likely to subsume Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF). It was recognised that there was significant uncertainty on the OfS planned future approach. OfS planned to present</p>	<p>VC July 25</p>

	<p>options in the next few months. The timescales organisations would have to respond to the changes were also unknown.</p> <p>NSS Survey – there had been good engagement by students. Results were due 9th July 2025.</p>	
	The HE Report was NOTED.	
09/05/25	FE Report	
	<p>The report provided a high-level overview of progress made with key areas of development for Hartpury College, recruitment for 2025-2026 and to provide an overview of recent updates to policy and the external environment.</p> <p>Policy / External Environment: <i>the external environment continued to evolve and the key areas of focus for us included:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ofsted updates - there was expected to be an increase on inclusivity. It was noted that the SAR and QuIP would continue to be based on the current Framework. 2. Department of Education Revenue and Capital Funding 3. Changes to requirements for Accountability Agreements – discussed in detail at FE Board. <p>Recruitment: to date our applications were strong across most areas; our focus was conversion activity. T-Level Agriculture strength of applications had continued and whilst Animal Management applications looked positive it was highlighted that we do not have a history of conversion in this area and continuation of existing qualifications were an additional challenge. A number of courses had been capped and operating waiting lists were being operated. A focus on promoting equine was ongoing. Triangulation of recruitment against applications for beds and transport was ongoing – currently this was not at the same level as prior years.</p> <p>Continuous Improvement: we continued to drive forward further improvements as reflected throughout the report, focusing on our Quality Improvement Plan actions. Deep dives were continuing. Managers were being involved in scrutinising each others departments. Btec examination results had been strong. T'level logistics had been challenging for the recent set up and uploading of employer projects, but the required timescales had been met. The volume of students meant this had been quite challenging and a lessons learnt process for this, and T'levels generally would be undertaken. Governors questioned what had been learnt to date and were advised logistics had been a key issue for discussion. The STEM action plan was being closely monitored. Governors queried when the teaching observation data would be available and were advised it would come to the June QuEst.</p>	
	The FE Report was NOTED.	
10/05/25	Student & Staff Voice	
	<p>Staff Governors <i>Uni Staff Governor – busy time for assessment and planning. It was considered an exciting time. Staff were looking forward to the Teaching & Learning Conference. Staff were keen to get into ULH and would be pleased when timescales were clear.</i></p> <p>Student Governors <i>College Deputy Student Governor – students generally positive about their experience. Some confusion in understanding relating to Btec content for exams and assignments and</i></p>	

relating to activities when students were “off timetable” post exams. It was confirmed students would be clearly communicated on these areas and that there were plans of activities for all students.

Positive Feedback on students feeling safe and being happy with the facilities. Some complaints relating to catering but it was confirmed that progress had been made and the Deputy Principal Resources confirmed she was continuing to meet regularly with Aramark and would feed this information in.

Governor Link Activity

Safeguarding – Barbara Buck – monthly attendance at meetings continues

Sustainability – Robert Brooks - ongoing conversations with Head of Sustainability

Skills & Careers – Sue Blake

Math & English – Chris Moody

Estates – Henry Hodgkins – report to follow

Overall Department Visit Feedback

Staff Morale – positive

Industry Links – Not directly relevant, but most examples used during teaching and learning relate directly to the vocational area with which individual students are engaged, which increases relevance to their primary qualifications and aids motivation

Students Feel Safe – Yes

Any Strategic Issues Raised:

T Level – animal staff were confident and looking forward to delivering the new T Levels from September. The new animal nursing/vet facilities and equipment are very much appreciated by all.

It was noted that involvement in the link governor scheme helped to triangulate the information provided at the meetings.

11/05/25 SFR Committee

Minutes of the Meetings 6th May 2025 were NOTED.

It was noted that key discussions had incorporated:

- the Management Accounts for March – focus on utility costs – external advice being considered.,
- Budget discussions,
- Capital Plan discussions – it was hoped these would come to the July Board – now scheduled for November following discussions with Forest of Dean District Council – Planning Department,
- EDI Annual Report – gender pay back in line with target and target to be reviewed,
- latest High Court ruling relating to Sex and Gender had been updated on – guidance was awaited but no major concern on implications for Hartpur operation.

Governors challenged whether the budget, and particularly the long-term forecast, sufficiently reflected the future falling demographics, the change of mindset many had towards university education and stressed the difficulties facing HE. The Vice-Chancellor confirmed he would take these challenges away for further reflection when the final budget was tested at SMT. The need to ensure our USPs were clear and our specialisms protected was stressed by governors. Governors questioned the appropriateness of capping courses in this environment. The Vice-Chancellor and Principal stressed need to

	protect the student experience and ensure access to key facilities.	
	<p>It was noted that the following had been approved under delegated authority:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EDI Annual Report • FE International Fees <p>And that the documents had been made available on the Board website.</p>	
12/05/25	Governance Update	
	<p>The Governance Report included the updated Articles of Association for the College following the changes agreed at the Boards in March in relation to the size of the FE Board – number of independent members and the title of the Principal – changing to Executive Principal. Once these changes were formally approved the Special Resolution and updated Articles of Association would be lodged with Companies House.</p> <p>It also highlighted the recent FE Commissioner Intervention Assessment Summary Report: Weston College of Further and Higher Education which outlined a range of governance issues. The full report would be taken to the next meetings of Search & Governance, and then Remuneration and Employment and Strategy Finance and Resources to ensure that any recommendations highlighted had been considered at Hartpury, whilst recognising that a number are Weston specific. It has already been discussed at SMT and by the Chair, Vice-Chancellor and Clerk and an update on the Hartpury position was provided against the recommendations which relate specifically to Weston. The importance of checks and balances which applied to all individuals in an institution were stressed. The importance of mechanisms for staff to raise concerns was also highlighted. It was noted new Internal Auditors were going to be in place for September and this would be an issue discussed with them and the Audit and Risk Management Committee. The importance of avoiding complacency was also stressed by governors. It was noted the length of tenure of governors was an area highlighted and this would again be considered by Search and Governance. Governors queried if there were any aspects of insurance that would need to be considered. It was agreed that the training on Management Accounts which would be provided at the next meeting would also be a helpful form of assurance.</p> <p>The FE Board formally APPROVED by Special Resolution the updated Articles of Association following changes agreed at the March Board; and the University Board formally APPROVED the updated version.</p> <p>The University and College Boards noted the FE Commissioner Intervention Assessment Summary Report: Weston College of Further and Higher Education and the position at Hartpury.</p>	
13/05/25	<p>Application of Hartpury Seal*</p> <p>None.</p>	
14/05/25	<p>Any Other Business</p> <p>None.</p>	
	The meeting closed at 12.10pm	

APPROVED