



# HARTPURY

## Minutes of the Meetings of Hartpury University and Hartpury College Boards 10 am Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> March 2025 Royal Agricultural University Campus

### 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  
Lucie Hammond  
Ian Robinson (Professor)  
Sue Blake  
Rose Stephenson  
Helen Wilkinson

### In Attendance

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

### University Board

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

### College Board

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

		ACTION & ACTION DATE
01/03/25	<b>Welcome</b> The Chair welcomed attendees to the meeting.  <b>Apologies and Confirmation of Quoracy</b> Apologies as detailed above.  It was confirmed the meetings of the University Board and the College Board were quorate.	
02/03/25	<b>Declaration of Interest</b> The Clerk advised that members' interests would be taken as those disclosed in the Register of Members Interests. It was noted that individuals whose terms of office were	

	<p>being discussed had an interest in that item and would withdraw.</p> <p><b>Standing Interests</b> – Chair, Vice-Chancellor/Principal and Chris Moody members of both University and College Boards</p>	
03/03/25	<p><b>Minutes of the meetings</b></p> <p>The Minutes of the University Board and the College Board meetings held on the 20th November 2024 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 February 2025 was agreed by the College Board to be a true and accurate record.</p> <p>The University Board's electronic approval of the formation of a subsidiary company was NOTED. It was confirmed that the name of the new company was Hartpury Football Club Limited.</p>	
04/03/25	<p><b>Matters Arising</b></p> <p>An action log had been provided updating on issues raised at previous meetings.</p> <p>It was noted that the Financial Regulations Working Group would meet on 2<sup>nd</sup> April.</p> <p><b>The update was NOTED.</b></p>	
	<b>Part 1 Priority Agenda Items</b>	
05/03/25	<p><b>Vice-Chancellor and Principal's Update</b></p> <p>The Vice-Chancellor and Principal provided a presentation which covered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• External environment</li> <li>• Hartpury highlights</li> <li>• Banking Update</li> </ul>	
1.	<p><b>External environment</b></p> <p>The following key facts, 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 – highlights from recent AoC SW Principal's meeting from CEO David Hughes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 16 to 19 - growth in numbers &amp; potentially on rates</li> <li>• Potential for annual capital grant – expected to be driven by student numbers, possibly with some weighting for adults. It was recognised that there might be a need to reflect on the college's asset base.</li> <li>• Youth Guarantee - reducing NEETs from c. 1m</li> <li>• Improving employment rate - 2m adults into work</li> <li>• Local Growth Plans - priority sector skills plans</li> <li>• Collaboration with universities - growth in 'commuter' students particularly at L4/L5</li> <li>• Growth and Skills Levy - more levy-funded training, more focus on intermediate level</li> <li>• Accountability and regulation - less bureaucracy? – this was a long-standing aspiration in FE.</li> </ul> <p>College Funding Announcements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In-year growth – 2/3 funded (~£160k)</li> <li>• NI funding – 85% funded</li> <li>• £302m Capital Allocation – detail confirmed in April</li> <li>• 16 - 18 course funding rate rise – 3.79% for 25/26</li> <li>• Funding for 25/26 likely to be + c. £2m compared to 24/25 (growth, rate increase, T-</li> </ul>	

	<p>levels)</p> <p>Proposed changes to Ofsted were outlined to the Boards – these were being trialled. An example report card was demonstrated. At this stage expected changes were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No overall grade</li> <li>• 5-point grading scale which wouldn't correlate to current gradings</li> <li>• Safeguarding assessment would either be met or unmet</li> <li>• Deep dives would be replaced by open conversations with discussions on plans in place to improve performance in areas where performance was below target.</li> <li>• Inclusion and support for high needs</li> <li>• Current emphasis on skills might be reviewed</li> <li>• Potentially a report would contain 20 judgements</li> <li>• Proposed new "exemplary" grade.</li> </ul> <p>It was agreed that the current proposed report was more complex than currently and was still being reflected on by Ofsted.</p>	
	<p>University - Robert Halfon, former Minister - reflections at recent GuildHE's skills session</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• L7 apprenticeships likely to be defunded</li> <li>• Funding – broadly unlikely to change</li> <li>• The day of the traditional delivery is over..... AI led, supported by tutor led sessions?</li> <li>• Don't lose sight of LLE – will take time but has potential to change things hugely</li> <li>• Disruptors important -&gt; Institutes of technology? Industry sponsored models?</li> <li>• International students are an important part of our economy</li> </ul> <p>The Board was briefed on the background of the new Chair of OfS, noting he was a Vice-Chancellor who would be retiring in August, with much sector experience.</p> <p>OfS's planned revised focus and planned areas of activity were outlined:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integrated quality system</li> <li>• Wider student interest</li> <li>• Sector resilience</li> <li>• Equality of opportunity golden thread</li> </ul> <p>It was noted that there was ongoing consultation about the Conditions of Registration, and that it was understood that in the future these were likely to be considered for existing registrants.</p>	
<b>2.</b>	<p><b>Hartpur Highlights</b></p> <p>Successful Christmas lecture.  Drumming &amp; Parkinsons Research by Professor Draper  Ofsted Residential Inspection outcome – Outstanding – formally recorded and the Team thanked.  Appointment of former student, lecturer, staff governor, coach Hartpur-Gloucester as Welsh Women's Rugby Coach and Zoe Aldcroft – former student and Gloucester-Hartpur player as Captain of England Team were highlighted.  It was confirmed that the NAF 5* International Horse Trials and British Eventing National Championships would take place at Hartpur 5 – 10 August 2025  Matt Cole – Head of Student Experience had been highly commended by HESPA (Higher Education Strategic Planners Association) for a student engagement project.  Veterinary Nursing &amp; Technical Skills Centre Official Opening had successfully taken place.  Automatic Milking Robots – new process highlighted.</p>	
	<p><b>The Update was NOTED.</b></p>	

	<b>Confidential Item - Commercial Sensitivity 3 years</b>	
<b>06/03/25</b>	<b>Confidential Item - Commercial Sensitivity 3 years</b>	
<b>07/03/25</b>	<b>Management Accounts – December 24</b>	
	<p>The Management Accounts provided an update on the financial position of the University Group. It was noted that the operating result for the five months ending December 2024 was a deficit of £1,523K compared to a budgeted deficit of £1,897K. The surplus was £700K ahead of this time last year due to a combination of higher revenue (a record number of students at enrolment), some Research Income carried forward from last year and a focus on cost control. It was confirmed that Cash balances at the month end were £2,696K and that 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>The Chief Operating Officer highlighted that the high-level reforecast would be more fully incorporated in the January accounts with analysis added to the more detailed Income and Expenditure pages. This showed a projected surplus of £1,843k compared to an original budget of £488k. He advised that although a more detailed reforecast was due to be completed as part of the January 2025 management accounts production, there was nothing to currently suggest that this overall surplus would not be largely be achieved. The Boards were advised that key changes expected in the more detailed forecast included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impact of the January 2025 pay award</li> <li>• Good student retention in Higher Education.</li> <li>• A better understanding of the move to outsource catering to Aramark</li> <li>• Full year impact of Zeelo contract for the transport provision.</li> <li>• Announcement from the ESFA regarding further in-year funding for T-levels and for higher student numbers generally.</li> </ul> <p>The Board reflected on the Management Accounts and questioned the utilities costs which were £550k higher than previously. It was confirmed that work was ongoing to unpick the utility costs and more fully understand them. The previous supplier had not been billing correctly and this needed to be resolved. The Chief Operating Officer advised that the overall transmission costs were higher than had been envisaged and work was on going to look at ways to reduce distribution and network charges.</p> <p><b>Confidential Item - Commercial sensitivity – two years</b></p>	
	<b>The University Board and College Board NOTED the Management Accounts.</b>	
<b>08/03/25</b>	<b>FE Report</b>	
	<p>The Deputy Principal Further Education highlighted the following key points from her report:</p> <p><b>Policy / External Environment:</b> the external environment continued to evolve and the key areas of focus for us included:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Devolution-</b> this would be an important area for discussion, at this point it was not known how this would work for Gloucestershire. It would be used to inform strategy once there was a clear position. It was highlighted that there could be an impact on strategy, curriculum and accountability structures.</li> </ol> <p>Governors queried if this was likely to lead to a focus on local and regional recruitment</p>	

which would impact Hartpury as a local, regional and national recruiter. The Deputy Principal Further Education advised that this would be kept under review, but at this stage a significant impact was not impacted. Governors commented that it would be important for Hartpury to continue to demonstrate its responsiveness to regional skills.

2. **Qualification Review** – the pause and review process by the government had led to a delay in the defunding of Btec and City and Guilds qualifications, until at least 2027. Hartpury planned to continue its progress to T'levels, but to be alert to any impact on recruitment.

3. **Ofsted updates** – this had been covered earlier in the meeting.

**Recruitment:** it was noted that to date our applications are strong across most areas; our main focus is conversion activity. T-Level Agriculture strength of applications had continued and whilst Animal Management applications looked positive, we do not have a history of conversion in this area and have the added complexity of the outcome of the qualification 'pause and review' and continuation of existing qualifications so will monitor closely.

**Continuous Improvement:** we continued to drive forward further improvements, focusing on our Quality Improvement Plan actions.

It was noted that Student Satisfaction continued to be strong. A governor highlighted that the recent satisfaction levels were below that at induction and questioned whether this was a typical position. The Deputy Principal Further Education advised that this did tend to be the pattern, but that it was not a significant reduction. She advised that all staff had a KPI to maintain student satisfaction and to try to keep to the induction level. She stressed that Student Satisfaction remained strong overall and that the key KPI for "I feel safe on campus" rarely dipped, and when it did so was scrutinised.

It was noted that the January Btec results were due that day.

It was confirmed that the actions to respond to the Local Skills Improvement Plan had been competed and that the Smart Farming hub would be completed on time and on budget. The Accountability Agreement process was on track to be completed to the required deadline.

The FE staff were thanked for their work in achieving the current position.

**The FE Report was NOTED.**

**09/03/25 HE Report**

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor highlighted key aspects within her report.

**Recruitment:** largely looking positive compared to sector, although predictions suggest limited growth overall for next academic year. Agriculture was performing in line with the previous year, animal was down and actions were ongoing to try to attract more students, equine was up on the previous year, sport was on target.

**Planning for 2025-26:** Activity was progressing and feeding into relevant budgeting processes. At this stage, we were on target to grow HE income significantly on previous year's budget, and aligned to OfS financial plans.

**Efficiency planning:** HE continued to work on opportunities to deliver our curriculum in a sustainable way, with financial benefits starting to be felt. Additionally, some of the

changes had improved our ability to timetable more effectively for students.

**External developments:** We continued to monitor sector developments including Lifelong Learning Entitlement (LLE), integrated quality assessment (IQR). The latter is likely to absorb Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) and review institutions against B3 (OfS Quality Conditions of Registration). This is something we would be monitoring very carefully. Timing of any planned changes was not yet known. OfS had suggested that the IQR would have additional costs for assessment, this was a concern for the sector, particularly for small institutions. At this stage it was thought Hartpury would be in a strong position against the proposed metrics, although it was flagged that it continued to build its digital capacity to support an effective response.

**Quality and curriculum:** Quality indicators continued to operate in line with target, with recent exam boards indicating sustained high levels of engagement by students. Curriculum development continued to progress. Governors queried whether proposed new curriculum was on track. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor advised that Hartpury was currently in the interview process for a lead for psychology who had suggested that the timetable for its introduction was ambitious, but this would be worked through. It was noted that 5 programmes, some new and some existing had been suspended due to low recruitment. Governors queried if there were any learnings from this. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor advised that the issue generally related to ensuring the programmes had sufficient identity to stand out and attract students. Work was ongoing to try to ensure all animal courses were viable. A governor questioned retention, particularly in relation to males. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor advised that retention was tracking at the same improved level as the previous year. White male retention was the subject of a working group and had improved. Work on this continued.

**Research and knowledge exchange:** the update demonstrated progress continued at pace.

**The HE Report was NOTED.**

#### 10/03/25 **Student & Staff Voice**

##### **Student Governors**

No issues had been highlighted

##### **Staff Governors**

*College Staff Governor – deep dives had taken place. Student focus and testing of knowledge had been key areas. Parents Days and Taster Day had taken place.*

##### **Governor Link Activity**

**Safeguarding** – Barbara Buck – monthly attendance at meetings continues

**Sustainability** – Robert Brooks – 3/12/24 - ongoing conversations with Head of Sustainability

**A levels and Access to HE** – Mary Heslop 11/03/25

**FE and HE Animal** – Alison Blackburn – 11/12/24, 27/02/25

**FE and HE Sport, Outdoor Adventure and Uniformed Public Services** – Fiona Reece – first meeting held with staff

**SU** – Patrick Brooke 6/12/24

**RKE** – Ian Robinson 21/01/25

**Estates** – Henry Hodgkins ongoing

**Agriculture** – Helen Wilkinson 3/12/24

**Equine** – Alastair Grizzell – 4/12/24 and 25/01/25

**EDI** – Rose Stephenson – 24/01/25 – EDI activities discussed – looking at ways to reach more staff – subsequent discussion at Managers Forum highlighted some additional ways to reach staff.

**Skills & Careers – Sue Blake- 25/11/24 & 19/12/24**

**Overall Department Visit Feedback**

**Staff Morale** - .yes.

**Industry Links** – strong – breadth demonstrated. Examples - new link with a local construction education business who will attend the June curriculum co-creation event and potentially provide post A level opportunities for students. A further new link is related to cyber security and there is an opportunity via this for delivery of a short cyber security course for students.

Clear evidence of the industry-led nature of Hartpury research.

Industrial links – farm staff have lots of connections – levy board, National Sheep Association, professional bodies and connections/ contacts with local industry.

There have been (and continue to be) co-creation industry events on the curriculum side, which also link with the careers side and student future prospects.

There are also commercial businesses that operate on-site and sponsorship engagement which provide additional income streams.

Relationships with employers are strong with over 2000 businesses on the database, distilled to a top 100 for industry/curriculum co-creation events linked to the five areas led by each Head of Department.

**Students Feel Safe** – Yes, some comments on lighting in equine carpark- these have been responded to (more positive feedback from FE Equine students).

**Any Strategic Issues Raised:**

Changing expectations of parents, Staff recruitment issues in some areas (maths), considerations of accessibility on site, catering – bedding in and being carefully monitored.

RDAP and REF work ongoing. Soil plant expertise - issues of succession planning.

Contributed to ongoing strategy development as sounding boards. Animal Resources – position improved by re-purposing of Veterinary Nursing Building.

Need to continue to build knowledge of Hartpury as a University.

Independent SU ongoing consideration.

A change in name from Innovation Careers and Employability to Careers Skills and Employability Service is underway to better reflect the role of the department and align with the Gatsby Benchmarks and skills landscape.

**Other Visits**

**Veterinary Nursing Building Opening** – Edward Keene, Robert Brooks, Fiona Reece

**Range of Football and Rugby matches** – Henry Hodgkins, Bill Marshall, Robert Brooks, Jon Renyard, Barbara Buck, Alastair Grizzell.

**The Updates were NOTED.**

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

**11/03/25 SFR Committee**

**Minutes of the Meetings 4<sup>th</sup> February 2025 were NOTED.**

It was noted that key discussions had incorporated the Management Accounts which had been discussed earlier in the meeting and strategies which would be considered later in the Strategy Days.

**It was noted that the following had been approved under delegated authority:**

Slavery & Human Trafficking Statement

Refunds Policy - FE & FE

EDI Policy

	Annual Insurance Report And that the documents had been made available on the Board website.	
12/03/25	<p><b>QuEST Committees</b></p> <p><b>Minutes of the Meetings 27<sup>th</sup> February 2025 were NOTED</b></p> <p><b>HE</b></p> <p>Key Topics discussed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• OfS Consultations and potential implications for RDAP – noting that proposed changes at registration were likely to develop into ongoing registration requirements.</li> <li>• OfS Integrated Quality Review – potential implications – as discussed within the HE Report</li> <li>• Cyclical reviews – potential costs and burden - – the introduction of visits was a change in the OfS approach. Costs could be substantial.</li> <li>• Business Couse CMI accreditation – congratulations recorded</li> <li>• RKE and HE Academic 2030 Strategies – to be discussed later in the strategy days</li> <li>• SU Report – transport challenges. Impressed by range of areas involved.</li> <li>• Complaints – helpful format – noted.</li> </ul> <p><b>FE</b></p> <p>Key Topics discussed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2030 FE Strategy - to be discussed later in the strategy days</li> <li>• KPI position – pleasing increase in A'level retention – to monitor if this impacts results.</li> <li>• QuIP Update - Pleased at the impact of the Rapid Improvement plans.</li> <li>• Positive introduction of T'levels to date – very encouraging.</li> <li>• Quality, Teaching &amp; learning Report Update</li> <li>• LA Inspection – positive report.</li> </ul>	
13/03/25 14.1	<p><b>Search and Governance Committee</b></p> <p><b>Minutes of Meetings 27<sup>th</sup> February 2025 were NOTED</b></p> <p>NB – governors whose terms of office were proposed as below left the meeting during the discussion of the proposal which related to them. It was noted where governors were proposed for re-appointment consideration had been given to future succession planning through the staggering of term of office lengths. The need to ensure that the Boards were renewed and refreshed was recognised.</p> <p><b>College Board</b></p> <p><b>The College Board APPROVED the College Search and Governance Committee recommendation to re-appoint Alastair Grizzell for a 4-year Term of office, 1st September 2025 – 31<sup>st</sup> August 2029, recognising his strong attendance, active link activity within and outside Hartpury in the business community, and his understanding of agriculture and locally based.</b></p> <p><b>The College Board APPROVED the recommendation from the College Search and Governance Committee to re-appoint Patrick Brooke for a two-year term of office, 1<sup>st</sup> September 2025- 31<sup>st</sup> August 2027, recognising his strong attendance, active link activity within and outside Hartpury in relation to business, stakeholders, fundraising and his audit and finance experience and Gloucestershire based.</b></p> <p><b>The College Board noted that the College Search and Governance Committee had AGREED a proposal to take forward a process to identify an individual with appropriate skills to Chair the Audit &amp; Risk Management Committee by Feb 2027, to enable a smooth transition in September 2027.</b></p> <p><b>The College Board APPROVED the recommendation from the College Search and</b></p>	



**Governance Committee to appoint Bill Meredith for membership of the College Board, subject to the size of College Board being increased to 12 (as was permitted within the Articles of Association) for a four year term of office from 19<sup>th</sup> March 2025- 18<sup>th</sup> March 2029 and for membership of the FE QuEST Committee for his knowledge of agriculture, leadership and management and sector knowledge.**

It had also been agreed to invite him to the strategy days as an observer (not to attend the Board meeting).

#### **University Board**

**The University Board APPROVED the recommendation from the University Search and Governance Committee to re-appoint Henry Hodgkins for a two-year term of office, 1<sup>st</sup> September 2025- 31<sup>st</sup> August 2027, recognising his strong attendance, active link activity within and outside Hartpur in relation to business, community and sport and Gloucestershire based.**

**The University Board APPROVE the recommendation from the University Search and Governance Committee to re-appoint Bill Marshall for a three-year term of office, 1<sup>st</sup> September 2025- 31<sup>st</sup> August 2028, recognising his strong attendance, active link activity within and outside Hartpur in relation to estates management, finance, sport, community**

#### **HE Quest**

**The University Board APPROVED the S&G Committee Recommendation that Jon Renyard's membership of HE Quest was extended for a further two academic years, from 19<sup>th</sup> March 2025 to 31<sup>st</sup> August 2027.**

#### **University and College Boards**

**The University and College Boards APPROVED the recommendation from the respective S&G Committees to appoint Clive Stainton as a co-opted member of the University and College Audit and Risk Management Committee from 19<sup>th</sup> March 2025 to 31<sup>st</sup> August 2026, recognising his IT and Cyber expertise.**

**Formal Thanks were recorded to Matthew Williams co-opted Audit and Risk Management Committee member whose term had ended.**

#### **14/03/25 Audit & Risk Management Committee**

**Minutes of Meetings 11<sup>th</sup> March 2025 were NOTED.**

Key Topics discussed:

Business Continuity Audit Report and ongoing plans to develop processes.

Health and Safety Annual Report – no significant issues. Recognised that the openness of the site could have some potential risks. A mass Alert system was being put in place, and could already be used for major events through the loudspeakers. Pleasing that actions taken to improve lighting in equine.

Risk Register – new format was being developed, it was an adjustment to review.

**It was noted that the following had been approved under delegated authority:**

Annual Health & Safety Report

Annual Value for Money Report

Annual Cyber & IT Report

	These were available on the governor website.	
<b>15/03/25</b>	<b>Application of Hartpury Seal*</b> None	
<b>16/03/25</b>	<b>Any Other Business</b> None.	
	<b>The meeting closed at 12.10pm</b>	

APPROVED