

Trustee Board Meeting

Monday 10th January 2022,
The Exchange, 16:00 – 18:00

Present

Robert Smeath, External Trustee **(RS)** (Chair)
 Mikey Brown, President **(President)** (Vice-chair)
 Jules Singh, Education Officer **(EO)**
 Josephine Conway, Activities and Employability Officer **(AEO)**
 Aaliyah Simms, Welfare and Community Officer **(WCO)**
 Wei-Lun Chen, International Officer **(IO)**
 George Christian, Sports Officer **(SO)**
 Danielle Murinas, Postgraduate Officer **(PGO)**
 Tom Goodman, Student Trustee (Postgraduate) **(TG)**
 Serabi Opiyo, BAME Student Trustee **(SEO)**
 Jake Poulton, Undergraduate Student Trustee **(JP)**
 Johnny Davis, External Trustee **(JD)**
 Wyn Williams, External Trustee **(WW)**
 Emma Wedge, External Trustee **(EW)**
 Henrietta Brealey, External Trustee **(HB)**
 Erica Conway, University Representative Trustee **(EC)**
 Ian Pain, External Trustee **(IP)**

In attendance

Jo Thomas, Chief Executive **(JT)**
 Sam Jones, Executive Assistant **(SJ)** (note taker)
 Adam Sheridan, Director of Engagement **(AS)**
 Emily Badger, Director of Operations **(EB)**
 Lucy Gill, Student Voice & Representation Manager **(LG)** (agenda items 12 & 13 only)
 Yinbo Yu, Incoming External Trustee **(YY)**

Apologies

Sarah Aray, International Student Trustee **(SA)**

The Chair welcomed all attendees and the meeting began at 16:10.

No	ITEM FOR DISCUSSION	NOTES	ACTION
1	Minutes of Previous Meeting (25.10.21)	The Chair presented the Trustee Board minutes, dated 25 th October 2021 for the Board's approval The Board approved the minutes as an accurate record of the meeting.	Noted Approved
2	Matters Arising	The Chair noted that no actions were outstanding from the previous minutes.	Noted
3	HR Committee Minutes (09.12.21)	The WCO presented the HR Committee minutes, dated 9 th December 2021 for the Board's approval.	Noted

		The WCO noted positive progress in the Guild's transition to the Staff Savvy HR system. The Board approved the HR Committee minutes.	Noted Approved
4	FC Committee Minutes (02.12.21)	The President presented the Finance Committee Minutes, dated 2 nd December 2021 for the Board's approval. The Board approved the Finance Committee Minutes.	Noted Approved
5	Officer Action Plans	<p>The President presented the Officer Team's updated action plans, for the Board's Information.</p> <p>The WCO noted plans to continue support for students in finding good quality housing. The WCO updated the Board on the planned letting membership scheme. The WCO noted plans to develop the 'Big Brum List' of student-friendly venues in the city and support the student community in Birmingham. The WCO noted the Guild's continuing project to lobby for additional welfare officers in the University, including additional drop-in hours across colleges. The WCO noted their plans to improve student safety in the local area via the Community Wardens scheme, sign-posting students to crisis support services in the city, and their 'Safe-Sesh' scheme for drug awareness, addiction support and drug testing kits. The WCO explained their 'Safe-Sesh project in detail, noting the possible involvement of the University's 'UB Heard' service.</p> <p>The AEO noted their success during Welcome Week 2021, noting the hard work of the Guild team to deliver in person events in a Covid safe way and with a positive turnout.</p> <p>The PGO noted their success with additional mental health training for University staff on PGR wellbeing. The PGO noted their plans to focus on research culture and re-connect the Guild with the Postgraduate Research (PGR) student community and develop the Guild's offering on personal development and employability for PGR students.</p> <p>The EO noted their success in the roll-out of the Guild's 'Zoom Zone' space, helping students to attend online learning and meetings while on campus. The EO noted their continuing focus on the UoB Access and Participation plan (APP) submission, and on the Guild's democratic processes.</p> <p>The SO noted positive progress on sports team wellbeing and mental health provision in collaboration with UB Sport. The SO noted plans to continue focusing on disabled student accessibility in sport in the new year.</p> <p>The IO noted the success in increasing engagement with international students in the Guild and raising the profile of the International Officer, particularly within Guild societies. The IO noted plans for more survey work on the experience of international students during the COVID-19 pandemic. The IO noted their continuing work to support and sign-post students to University Support for visa problems.</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p>

		<p>The President noted their success in communicating with students on topical and social issues, including the recent UCU strike action, COVID-19, COP-26 and the Climate Emergency. The President noted their plans to launch a Renters Union for students in Birmingham and continue to empower students to take action on their housing rights.</p> <p>RS noted the Officer Team’s timeline document for the rest of the academic year. The Board discussed the Officer’s planned list of activity.</p> <p>The Board discussed the rise of international student complaints over visas during the pandemic. YY noted a significant increase nationally of international students facing issues arranging student visas and following Home Office guidance. JT noted the significant pressure on the University International Student team (IST) and the IO over the last 12 months on visa issues. RS suggested focusing on visa issues with respect to the Guild’s current funding discussions with the University. HB asked about the University’s prioritisation of visa support for international students. The IO noted that the Guild had been successful in lobbying for a change in University policy to allow international students to continue studying online for Semester two onwards following the outbreak of the Omicron variant of COVID-19.</p> <p>TG asked about resource to support PGR students. The PGO noted their continuing work with the graduate school to improve communications and signposting of support services to PG students.</p> <p>JD asked the President about the Guild’s communications to students. The President noted that issues around drink spiking in Birmingham venues had dominated the Guild’s communications to students since Welcome Week 2021. The President noted their aim to move past ‘crisis comms’ and stay ahead of events moving forward. The President noted they felt the Guild’s communications on COVID-19 in November and December 2021 had been much better than the same period in 2020. The President noted significant pressures on their diary which had slowed progress on several of their manifesto plans. The PGO noted feedback from PG students on Guild communications, particularly around elections, which could be improved.</p> <p>WW noted that they were impressed with the amount of progress in Semester One from the Officer Team. RS suggested a ‘one-page’ summary to the University’s senior team and incoming Vice-Chancellor on the Guild’s progress in Semester One.</p> <p>The Board noted the updated Officer Action Plans.</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p>
6	CEO Report	<p>JT presented the CEO Report, for the Board’s Information.</p> <p>JT noted that semester one engagement figures across the organisation were very good, despite a continuing difficult operating environment under COVID-19 risks and controls.</p> <p>JT noted that workload across the organisation continued to be high, with instances of long-term sickness within the organisation. EW asked about the resilience of the staff team with regards to workload and good-will</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p>

		<p>from staff moving forwards. JT noted that the Guild's staff turnover had been very low all the way through the COVID-19 pandemic, and staff had been very receptive to flexible working. JT noted that anecdotally staff movement was beginning to increase, and the Guild would continue to focus on its people strategy into 2022.</p> <p>JT updated the Board on an ongoing review of the Guild's complaints process. JT noted that complaints workload had significantly increased over the last 18 months with complex cases requiring significant input from senior managers. EC noted the University's move to increasingly automated query systems. EB noted that a new UoB process was being reviewed and would be part of the Guild's planned migration to the University's IT services in 2022.</p> <p>JT noted an expected £1.7m investment planned in the Guild's IT systems and building infrastructure, which had recently been approved by the University.</p> <p>HB asked about national lateral flow test (LTF) shortages and the accessibility for students to access them. JT noted that the University had continued to provide good levels of LTF supplies to students and staff on campus. JT noted that the Guild had so far delivered one club night with the COVID-19 Pass system in place, and this had gone relatively smoothly. AS noted, plans for the Guild's reopening of club nights on the 19th January, which would be compliant with current COVID pass requirements.</p> <p>The Board noted the CEO Report.</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p>
7	<p>Management Accounts & Budget Reforecast</p>	<p>JT presented the Management Accounts & Budget reforecast for the Board's approval.</p> <p>JT noted that overall the Guild's budget appeared good with a circa £78k positive variance against budget due to a very healthy reopening of the Guild's venues activity in Semester One. JT noted a reported surplus of circa £244.4k in across Guild venues, which was very good to see after 18 months of uncertainty around trading.</p> <p>JT noted ongoing work to account for VAT in the budgets of the Community Wardens and Hall Reps scheme, resulting in a budget deficit of circa £135k, which was dependent the Guild's current ongoing challenge to HRMC's ruling on the Guild's historic VAT liability.</p> <p>HB asked about increases in the Guild's utility bills, noting national discussions about rising energy costs. EC noted that the Guild's utility bills were handled through the University and were hedged until 2023.</p> <p>HB asked about general inflation and its implications for the Guild's budget. JT noted an expected increases in stock costs for the Guild's bars, which were handled through the NUS buying consortium. AS noted that prices were currently largely stable for drinks, however food costs were beginning to increase as well as issues with availability. JT noted expected increases in the National Living Wage, which would likely lead</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p>

		to increased costs to the Guild's base costs in venues for student staff wages. The Board noted the Management Accounts & Budget Reforecast.	Noted
8	HMRC Update	JT presented the HMRC Update for the Board's approval. JT updated the Board on the Guild's long-term HMRC issue, which was currently progressing towards a tribunal. The Board discussed the Guild's HMRC case. JT agreed to undertake a call with RSM and the legal counsel to chase on progress to date. The Board agreed to defer a final decision on the instruction of a brief to legal counsel, however agreed to continue with the process as planned. The Board approved the HMRC Update.	Noted JT Deferred Approved
9	Commercial Review Update	AS presented the Commercial Review update for the Board's information. AS noted that the Guild had worked closely with the University's Campus Services team over the last several months to review a number of operating options for campus venues, including the Guild. The Board noted the Commercial Review Update.	Noted Noted Noted
10	Residence Life Update	JT presented the Residence Life Update for the Board's information. JT updated the Board on progress of the Residence Life review, noting the current provision of support for students in university accommodation delivered by the Guild. JT noted that a significant amount of consultation with stakeholders had taken place via Redbrick Research, the external consultants appointed for this work. JT noted that the final report was expected in the next few days. JD asked about possible resource and structural changes within the final report. JT noted that both the Hall Reps and Community Wardens schemes were at capacity within the current model. EC noted that the current schemes were best-in-class in the sector, and the final report should reflect the positive nature of the current operations, as well as recommendations for improvement. The Board noted the Residence Life Update.	Noted Noted Noted Noted Noted
11a	Long term Strategy 2021/26	EB presented the Strategy 2021/26 for the Board's approval. EB updated the Board on ongoing work on the Guild's planned 5-year strategic plan, noting reviews of several KPI's & KPT's to ensure that these were deliverable. EB noted recent work with the Guild's Management Team and Officer Team on current capacity within the organisation. EB noted current capacity pressures within the organisation, particularly around specific roles for PG and International students. EB noted ambition within the organisation to expand capacity to	Noted

		<p>support the planned elements of the strategy. EW noted the value of expanding capacity in the organisation to match demand and back-fill roles which had been previously reduced. RS noted the demands of a growing student population, and the need for the Guild to match this expansion in the financial ask.</p> <p>EB noted that the operating plan was being presented for approval, subject to possible changes in-light of the Guild's funding settlement with the University. EB noted that the draft strategic plan would be taken forwards over the following week to an away day for the Management Team and Officer Team.</p> <p>The Board approved the Strategy 2021/22 update.</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Approved</p>
11b	5 Year Funding & Forecast	<p>JT presented the 5 Year Funding & Forecast for the Board's approval.</p> <p>JT updated the Board on the current tight timetable for the completion of the Guild's 5-Year funding ask to the University, to be concluded by early March 2022. JT noted the Guild's revised budget 'ask' and 5-year forecast to support the long term strategy in the previous agenda item.</p> <p>JT noted that the Guild's budget expectations for commercial revenue had been updated following the conclusion of the commercial review with Campus Services.</p> <p>JD recommended the additional inclusion of resource 'ask' in relation to support for International Students. JD noted the impact of the Guild's previous reductions in staff headcount and suggested making the impact of these previous reductions clear to the University, communicating the need to rebuild capacity.</p> <p>RS noted the University's recent willingness for additional funding for student academic engagement provision following discussions earlier in the day. RS suggested including provision for an additional academic experience post in the Guild's financial 'ask'.</p> <p>EW noted the significant amount of workflow on the current operating plan, noting the need to transition from 'resilience' to 'capacity-building' in terms of staff resource. EW suggested focusing on a narrative of 'students first' as a good-value investment for the University in terms of improving the student experience. RS noted the value of focusing on where the Guild was able to provide services more effectively than the University.</p> <p>TG asked about the future of the Student Experience Intern roles at the University moving forwards. EC noted that current funding was confirmed for the current academic year only. TG noted the suggestion of bringing these roles within the Guild.</p> <p>TG asked about ongoing costs of greater digital provision. EB noted the risk of additional ongoing costs following capital expenditure on digital infrastructure. WW recommended the development of a Business Analyst post.</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p>

		EW noted a typographical error in the operating plan. EB to update. The Board approved the 5 Year Funding & Forecast, subject to discussed changes.	EB Approved
12	NSS Project Update	Agenda Items 12 & 13 were discussed out of order, between Items 4 & 5. LG joined the meeting at 16:15 LG presented the NSS Project Update for the Board's information. LG noted that since the last updated the Board, a significant amount of progress on the Guild's work on the National Student Survey (NSS) had been completed, including the appointment of a staff member to lead the project, and the Guild's student survey. LG noted that more than 3,000 students had completed the survey, with the output data shared with the Guild's Officer and Management teams. LG noted that work was ongoing to identify barriers to engagement in the Guild to identify 'quick wins' which could be progressed within existing service provision. LG noted plans for the new year to expand information on the Guild's website for services available, and to continue mapping the Guild's service delivery on NSS with respect to head count in the organisation. JT noted that a workshop on the NSS project had been recently held with the Guild's Management team, with a number of positive outputs and ideas from Guild Managers. The PGO noted the upcoming departure of the staff member responsible for the NSS project. LG noted that work was ongoing to support the project going forwards, however resource challenges were a factor. The Board noted the NSS Project Update.	Noted Noted Noted Noted Noted Noted Noted
13	Democracy Operations Update	Agenda Items 12 & 13 were discussed out of order, between Items 4 & 5. LG presented the Democracy Operations Update for the Board's Information. LG noted a successful autumn Guild election cycle with 252 applications for positions, and a total of 1074 votes. LG noted that all typical democratic committee meetings, including the All Student Meeting had taken place. LG noted that the Guild's Officer team had called a referendum on the Guild's policy on the UCU strike action in December, which had seen more than 2,000 students voting and resulted the Guild retaining its stance of supporting strike action, albeit under a new policy. YY asked about arrangements for the Guild's spring elections in light of COVID-19 and meeting quoracy. LG noted that turn out at recent All Student Meetings had been a challenge, however had been improved by	Noted Noted Noted Noted

		<p>several key decisions made at the most recent meeting. The WCO noted that the turn out at the All Student Vote had been very good.</p> <p>RS noted that this would be LG's last Trustee Board meeting at the Guild of Students. The Board thanked LG for their hard work over the last 7 years and wish them all the best for the future.</p> <p>The Board noted the Democracy Operations Update.</p> <p>LG left the meeting at 16:25.</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p>
14	Delegation of Authority	<p>JT presented the Delegation of Authority for the Board's approval.</p> <p>The paper was taken as read, with no questions asked.</p> <p>The Board approved the updated Delegation of Authority.</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Approved</p>
15	AOB (Any Other Business)	<p>RS noted that this would be the last Trustee Board meeting for WW following the completion of two full terms as a Trustee of the organisation. The Board thanked WW for their time and commitment to supporting the Guild over the last 6 years and wished them all the best for the future.</p> <p>The Trustee Board discussed a possible extraordinary Trustee Board to be scheduled online for the 8th February 2022. SJ to diarise.</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>SJ</p>
16	Meeting Reflection	<p>RS thanked the Board for attending the away day and meeting.</p>	<p>Noted</p>

The Chair closed the meeting at 18:00.

Date of Next Meeting:
 Tuesday 8th February 2022, 17:00 – 18:00, Online