Trustee Board Meeting

Monday 11th May 2026, 18:00– 20:00
Mandela Room, Guild of Students

Present
Ruth Pipkin, External Trustee **(RP)** (Chair)
Antonia Listrat, Guild President **(President)**
Jacob Dyke, Education Officer **(EO)**
Abhijeet Patel, Sports Officer **(SO)**
Simrah Inamdar, International Officer **(IO)**
Emeline Brown, Activities & Employability Officer **(AEO)**
Abby Kenrick, Welfare & Community Officer **(WCO)**
Helen Stone, External Trustee **(HS)**
Emma Wedge, External Trustee **(EW)**
Penelope Hackett, External Trustee **(PH)**
Simone Hawley, BAME Student Trustee **(SH)**
Mark Price, External Trustee **(MP)**
Umar Sabir, Undergraduate Student Trustee **(US)**
Harshitha Naidu, International Student Trustee **(HN)**
Neil Hanley, University Representative Trustee **(NH)**

In attendance
Chris Luck, Observer **(CL)**
Tanisha Sangha, Observer **(TS)**
Jo Thomas, Chief Executive **(JT)**
Emily Badger, Director of Operations **(EB)**
Adam Sheridan, Director of Engagement **(AS)**
James Lindsay, Director of Community & Representation **(JL)**
Lisa Clark, People & Administration Manager **(LC)** (note taker)

Apologies
Mikey Brown, Postgraduate Student Trustee **(MB)**
Aliasgar Gandhi, Postgraduate Officer **(PGO)**
Nick Bailey, Director of Finance & Systems **(NB)**

The Chair welcomed all attendees and introduced the new Trustees as observers prior to joining the Board as Trustees in July 2026. The meeting began at 18:00.

No	Item for Discussion	Notes	Action
1	**Minutes of Previous Meeting (16.03.26)**	The Chair presented the minutes of the previous meeting, dated 16th March 2026, for the Board's approval. **The Board approved the Trustee Board minutes.**	**Noted** **Approved**
2a	**Matters Arising**	The Chair presented the Action Tracker for the Board's information. The Chair noted 2 items on the tracker were paused, and the Risk Register would be presented at the next Audit & Risk Committee. **The Board noted the Action Tracker.**	**Noted** **Noted** **Noted**

2b	**Declarations of Interest**	The Chair asked Trustees to declare any conflict of interests relating to the items on the meeting's agenda. No conflicts of interests were declared.	**Noted** **Noted**
3	**HR Committee Minutes (23.04.26)**	WCO presented the HR Committee Minutes (23.04.26) for the Board's approval. PH queried if Officers were subject to the Working Time Directive (WTD) and how we are supporting them. JT noted Officers are employees and are subject to the WTD. They have regular wellbeing meetings with the People & Administration Manager and can log and claim back any additional hours worked, within the HR Software. HS queried if there was a plan to improve the engagement of staff in the Community & Representation directorate, and to improve the survey results in that particular area. JT noted SMT have met and requested additional data to focus / target bespoke actions with this directorate. JT further noted that the company who deliver the external survey have recently changed and we have cannot access as much data as we have before. This feedback has been raised. We plan to meet again and with the respective managers of those areas and will report back to HR Committee. EO queried the Pay Award for student staff and the National Living Wage. RP noted this has been discussed at Finance Committee and whilst there the intention to meet this target, we also need to consider the longer-term budget and also see how JDW performs financially. EO asked if there was any consideration for unsociable hours pay for student staff in venues. AS noted that this is a motion going through the democratic system which is to be looked at. **The Board approved the HR Committee Minutes**.	**Noted** **Noted** **Noted** **Noted** **Noted** **Noted** **Approved**
4	**Finance Committee Minutes (21.04.26)**	The President presented the Finance Committee Minutes (21.04.26) for the Board's approval. **The Board approved the Finance Committee Minutes**.	**Noted** **Approved**
5	**CEO Report**	JT presented the CEO Report for the Board's information. JT noted continued work on the JDW project, and work on the Strategic Operating Plan for year 5 following the Compact Meeting. JT noted it is the last meeting today for EW, and HN are about to leave their studies and, therefore, 2 new Trustees have been appointed and are attending today as observers. JT noted the positive work by the Officers and the Advice team on Renters Rights Policy change.	**Noted** **Noted** **Noted** **Noted**

		JT noted the Officer elect onboarding, training and support into the organisation.	**Noted**
		WCO noted the work that had taken place around Renters Rights which affects lots of students who were very engaged. HM noted they found the information on social media about Renter Rights to be very helpful.	**Noted**
		EO queried staff recruitment and if there was a timeline for the roles to be filled. JT noted this is being worked on with the relevant managers. EO asked if the timeline could be completed as soon as possible and JT noted that the workload of current staff also needs to be considered.	**Noted**
		NH asked which roles have been recruited to and JT confirmed those roles. JT noted the Pub Manager & Kitchen Manager are recruited for Joes.	**Noted**
		IO noted Dubai campus exams remain online, and students are having difficulty travelling back to Dubai. The Dubai student leaders have held online sessions to help assist students.	**Noted**
		The Board noted the CEO report.	**Noted**
6	**Budget Reforecast 2025/26 (including Management Accounts)**	JT presented the Budget Reforecast 2025/26 (including Management Accounts) for the Board's approval.	**Noted**
		RP noted this item had been presented and approved at Finance Committee.	**Noted**
		JT noted a charge of £142K in the reforecast. JT noted the pension adjustment, which is much more positive, as the liability has now reduced by half. JT noted our annual repayments fall by 20% and repayment length has reduced by 3 years.	**Noted**
		JT noted the JDW forecast which brings in the sales and costs information. This is currently in a negative position, as we have had to meet early one-off set up costs, as opposed to paying for these items in the 2026/27 financial year, and it also includes a high level of training costs.	**Noted**
		JT noted £37.5K operational savings through cancelled vacancy provisions. JT noted reduced income earning from bank interest due to the JDW spend. JT further noted identified savings of £23K, as recruitment had been paused, and noting that Finance Committee had agreed to open recruitment. JT noted we are now approximately £70K below the budget forecast.	**Noted**
		EW queried if it is worth looking at buying out of the pension. JT noted if we had bought out 2 years ago, we would have paid more money to do this as there was a higher valuation at that time. JT noted that the Guild reserves needed to be built back after the JDW investment, and that this could be an option for the future.	**Noted**

		PH queried what are the risks should we buy out. JT noted the scheme is closed and has been for around 12 years, and so doesn't affect any current members of staff. **The Board approved the Budget Reforecast 2025/26 (including Management Accounts)**	**Noted** **Approved**
7	**Budget 2026/2027**	JT presented Budget 2026/2027 for the Board's approval. JT noted this is a draft budget with still work to be completed regarding further savings and funding a Cost-of-Living budget. JT noted actions from the recent Compact meeting, and a further meeting with university finance colleagues who were satisfied with the progress. JT noted a significant improvement to JDW contribution, with improvement in marketing sales as well as Grad Ball & Sports Ball. JT noted net charges to Residence Life reserves, where we are winding down the reserves currently held. It was further noted that we had been requested to make savings in this area, due to the direct funding from Campus Services, and confirmed this was circa £125K. JT noted that the grant rise has been agreed in line with the 5-year plan. It was further noted that a business case to fund Cost-of-Living activities was presented, but unfortunately this has not been funded, and so we are reviewing what the steps will be for next year. JT noted an assumption of £100k capital expenditure. NH queried if the JDW budget has been informed by what had happened elsewhere, and AS confirmed that it had been based on two other Students' Unions experiences. EO queried the £12k savings for Welcome team and if this is staffing costs or if they will be working less hours. JL noted the saving was a natural saving as Campus Services have asked us to staff less areas compared to previous years such as car parks, as they are paying their student staff to do this. SH queried the additional Cost-of-Living budget, and if there was specific feedback for not funding this. JT noted that we did not need to meet the 5/10% saving for 2026/27, in the same way other departments had. As such we had received the agreed financial uplift for the 2026/27 year and not had to find savings but were requested to find alternative ways to fund the Cost-of-Living budget. JT further noted we are arranging a workshop to review this work with university colleagues. President noted that by presenting the data to university meetings and discussing basic needs, the University confirmed that the Students' Union was the best way to deliver Cost-of-Living. EW queried what was the financial ask for the Cost-of-Living budget and JT noted approximately £150k.	**Noted** **Noted** **Noted** **Noted** **Noted** **Noted** **Noted** **Noted** **Noted** **Noted** **Noted**

		RP further noted we had expected a possible savings or reduction to the grant and that it was positive that it didn't happen. MP noted doing work in advance of this meeting helps frame the discussion well. JT noted a Cost-of-Living presentation had been prepared prior to the meeting and WCO noted the multiple discussions that had taken place with stakeholders prior to the Compact meeting NH noted the Guild have done well regarding the Compact meeting outcome, considering the wider university picture. NH suggested that the basics such as Community Breakfast and Sports Access Fund work should be focussed on in terms of funding, moving forward. **The Board approved the Budget 2026/2027**	**Noted** **Noted** **Noted** **Approved**
8	**JDW Project Update**	AS presented the JDW Project Update for the Board's information. AS presented photographs of the bar during the build process. AS noted the bar frontage and kitchen area, confirming £240k of equipment has been delivered over the last week. AS noted training plans are in place with over 200 student staff who have received training offsite, both in JDW pubs and online. AS noted the Pub Manager & Kitchen Manager have been seconded from JDW for 6 months. AS noted pricing & menu products, branding & design and a new website. AS further noted the final stages for opening on 26th May, and explained that blitz day is when all orders arrive across a single day. AS noted launch plans for 26th May, with Officers to open the bar and then be open for trade. AS noted the opening hours are 8am – 12am / 1am except when Sports & Fab nights take place. AS noted the new Joes logo and menu details, noting we are providing the full JDW menu. AEO queried if there were any communications plans to announce the opening date. EB confirmed these will be out this week. EO queried have we planned for queues outside the door on opening day. AS noted we have many staff and support from JDW staff who will support as required. MP noted we have 200 staff and queried how many staff there would be for a normal JDW pub and AS confirmed there would be approximately 75 staff. MP noted that they sit on the Project Board, and as such can see how much hard work has gone into this project to finish on time and to budget and offered their congratulations to all involved.	**Noted** **Noted** **Noted** **Noted** **Noted** **Noted** **Noted** **Noted** **Noted** **Noted**

		PH asked what marketing plans are in place once the initial excitement had died down. EB noted an annual calendar of marketing scheduled by JDW including updates to point of sale. EB noted we have established social media that we will collaborate on, and we are looking at how we advertise to the public market as well as looking at paid advertising and social media channels. AS noted the World Cup is also an opportunity. NH queried if we have connected this opportunity to student recruitment next year and if we can investigate this. EB confirmed we will utilise our existing university contacts. AS noted the assumption that a number of PGR and International students remain on campus over the summer, as well as large number of staff, contractors and builders. SH noted PGRs are likely to be on campus in June HS queried which parts of the building will be JDW. AS confirmed Joes bar & Mermaid bar and designated seating in Mermaid Square, whilst the of the building rest is Guild, including the Underground bar. RP thanked all the team who have worked so hard on this project. **The Board noted the JDW Update.**	**Noted** **Noted** **Noted** **Noted** **Noted** **Noted**
9a	**Referenda Options**	JT presented Referenda Options for the Board's approval. JT noted the options for the approach to the referenda, including campaign team, budgets, and Student Group involvement. The staff team had reviewed the wider Students' Unions sector. JL further noted the importance of the safety of the vote, and how reliable the outcome of the vote would be. JL noted that unlike the elections process, you cannot remove a candidate. If the referendum was found to be unsafe, the process would be void and re-run. WCO noted option A and asked how students be able to sign up to campaign teams. JL noted processes will be built on the website for students to sign up, ahead of Guild Officer Group confirming the date of a referenda. WCO queried if there would be any planned social media content to promote a Referenda. JL confirmed that it will be shared as widely as possible. EO noted some informal campaign groups forming who have substantial followings and how we would respond to these. JL noted unofficial campaign groups could materially affect the vote, and any actions would likely be treated in the same way as those in the formal campaigns.	**Noted** **Noted** **Noted** **Noted** **Noted** **Noted**

		WCO asked if students within a Student Group endorsed a particular side of a campaign, there would be any consequences. JL noted this would be considered through the Student Groups Policy and the Returning Officer would consider if the action had affected the referenda.	**Noted**
		President noted some students have reached out asking what the time frame is to communicate the decision. JT noted that the timeframe is tight but achievable.	**Noted**
		JL noted campaign teams can create their own material, and the process for review is to be within the regulations, provided we build in budget and capability.	**Noted**
		President noted there are not many students on campus in June and proposed it is moved into next year noting they don't believe quoracy can be reached in June.	**Noted**
		JL noted that it would be normal to ask the referendum question in the academic year that the petition was brought to the Guild. JL noted the advice is to progress the referendum as soon as possible. This would not prevent a further petition at a later date.	**Noted**
		EW noted they support option A, which gives the Guild more protection, particularly with campaign material. EW noted the Guild must protect itself as far as it can.	**Noted**
		EW noted the timelines, that part of the previous complaint was that the regulations were late, and queried if the regulations are ready to go.	**Noted**
		EW queried what happens if there is no full campaign on one side, and would there be a campaign run by the Guild that provides another argument.	**Noted**
		JT noted we have referendum regulations and helpful information from Manchester and Liverpool. JL noted Manchester had active 'disaffiliate' and 'remain' campaigns and had asked NUS not to come onto campus, however Liverpool had an active 'disaffiliate' campaign but no 'remain' campaign and had requested that NUS come on campus and run the 'remain' campaign.	**Noted**
		JL noted they advised against the Guild running any campaign and to remain impartial.	**Noted**
		PH queried the process if there was a breach and who makes the decision. JL confirmed it would be Returning Officer who is a member of SMT	**Noted**
		MP noted they favoured option A, noting the resource required for the new student year and how prepared students would be for the referendum question.	**Noted**

		MP also noted the annual review of the Byelaws, and this work should include a more detailed review of referenda. HS noted they prefer option A and that it is better to promote the Guild being impartial and reflect broader students' opinion. EO noted they also support option A and queried how to monitor campaigning and what is required to be completed this academic year as there are students who signed the petition who will be graduating. EO noted students who saw the petition campaign and didn't physically campaign in person but did so via WhatsApp and social media, so there is an argument to say students don't have to be here on Campus. RP noted they also support option A and confirmed that MB had also supported option A via email. President noted Student Groups cannot support campaigns and asked what the rationale is to prevent societies having a say in this. JL noted the short timeline to allow Student Groups to organise, and we would have to administer any complaints received after the fact. JL noted there are high risks with this approach. RP noted the risk increases further and with Student Groups campaigning it is difficult to see if it is all the group or specific individuals. EO noted this could result in two complaints; one for the society and one for individuals and some committees would say it's a committee decision. RP asked for other Officers views. IO noted this academic year is the better option for international students as they will understand the context of what is being asked and noted that there are around 12k students here in June on campus. WCO noted they are keen for it to be this year, as we have a reputation to maintain as an effective Students' Union. WCO noted students at home are still engaged. WCO noted it is not to say there would not be another petition. President noted that most students are not going to UOBXtra and that most leave after exams end. President noted reputationally it would be better to run the Referendum next academic year to allow everyone the chance have their opinion. EO noted everyone does get a say and they don't have to be on campus to vote, as the Officer elections had shown. RP noted the Referendum needed to take place in this year and further noted that the communications are important and key to reaching students on both campus and at home.	**Noted** **Noted** **Noted** **Noted** **Noted** **Noted** **Noted** **Noted** **Noted** **Noted** **Noted** **Noted** **Noted** **Noted** **Noted**

		EW noted concerned with timelines and asked for a break clause to look at dates again if not ready 2 weeks before.	**Noted**
		RP noted the majority of Trustees support the referenda taking place this academic year.	**Noted**
		The Board Approved Option A	**Approved**
9b	**Byelaws 2026**	JT presented the Byelaws for the Board's approval.	**Noted**
		JT noted that there were minor changes and some housekeeping amendments presented. JT further noted that they were expecting some minor feedback from the university legal team, which could be approved by the President and Chair following the meeting, if the Board approved this.	**Noted**
		President queried the commitments around action groups and Officers facilitating action groups, and what the changes mean, as well as the note about the CEO or nominee present at action groups.	**Noted**
		JT confirmed this language was reflected in other areas in the Byelaws. JL noted that in the action groups, the staff have a duty to support the Officer in the action group.	**Noted**
		President expressed her negative experience in an action group and her worry with this change.	**Noted**
		JT noted that the best experienced staff member should be aligned with the action group and the CEO would nominate in line with other committees.	**Noted**
		RP asked the Board for approval in order for the Byelaws to go to Council in June.	**Noted**
		The Board approved the Byelaws and the approach to future minor amendments.	**Approved**
10	**Dubai Student Association Update**	JL and IO presented the Dubai Student Association Update for information	**Noted**
		JL explained that the University developed its offer in Dubai, which began in 2016, considering the HE market expanding across Middle East. The University had developed this to support with an increase to recruitment and meet the needs of a global offer. The new campus opened in 2022. JL noted other universities are in the same area and it is a purpose-built campus.	**Noted**
		JL noted that the academic structure replicated the Birmingham campus and currently had approximately 2.7k students and 160 staff, with a long-term aim of 5k students. JL explained the student demographics on the Dubai campus.	**Noted**
		JL noted there are regular meetings with the Dubai Student Association and the Guild. JL noted Trade Unions are not permitted in Dubai, and	

		as such the Students' Union is an Association. JL noted we are reviewing the support and the MOU between the Guild and Dubai. IO noted they had visited Dubai and provided an overview of the visit. IO noted that they had spoken to student leaders about their experience and reflected the support and training received is not aligned with their campus but is more generalised. SI noted that student leaders are expected to work with a high degree of autotomy, with little staff support, compared with the Birmingham campus model. IO further noted that student leaders take on significant responsibilities with no financial payment. IO noted the budget for the Student Association is low considering the activities they are expected to provide. IO noted there is no on campus finance team resulting in lengthy queries for fees. IO noted conversations with PVC International on these matters. PH queried the governance model and accountability from the University. JT noted that the Student Association has no resource in Dubai but is supported though the Wellbeing team with Guild professional support and advice. PH queried how the key issues will be worked on, and we progress this without a formal governance link. JT noted that existing MOU was being reviewed to take account of the developments over the past few years. EW queried further student numbers and growth, and NH confirmed the campus was now at a break-even position and that applications are up for the next academic year. **The Board noted the report and presentation on the Dubai Students Association.**	**Noted** **Noted** **Noted** **Noted** **Noted** **Noted** **Noted** **Noted** **Noted**
11	**Officer Elections Report 2026**	**This item was deferred to next Trustee Board meeting.**	**LC**
12	**Strategic Update**	EB presented the Strategic Update for the Board's information. EB noted the update to operating plan and identified work such as Cost-of-Living and the timeline for the new strategic review. RP noted the research budget, and EB noted the timeline is subject to reviewing the funding. RP noted student input into the next Strategic review was key and queried whether the Officers can help with cost effective ideas for more student input. EB noted all the funding would be used solely for student feedback and would seek the thoughts of the outgoing Officers.	**Noted** **Noted** **Noted** **Noted**

		The Board noted the Strategic Update	**EB**
13	**Officer Action Plans**	The Sports, International, Welfare & Community, and Activities & Employability Officers presented their action plans for the Board's information. The President & EO provided a verbal update on their action plans. **The Board noted the Officer Action Plans**	**Noted** **Noted** **Noted**
14	**Risk Register Update**	**The Board noted the Risk Register update.**	**Noted**
14	**AOB (Any Other Business)**	RP noted their difficult decision to not stand for a second term as Chair in October 2026, due to family and work commitments. RP noted EW's last Board meeting today and thanked her for all her support as Trustee over the last 6 years.	**Noted** **Noted**
15	**Meeting Reflection**	No items noted.	**Noted**

The Chair closed the meeting at 20:18

Date of Next Meeting: Monday 6th July 2026