Trustee Board Meeting
Monday 16th March 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)**
Aliasgar Gandhi, Postgraduate Officer **(PGO)**
Helen Stone, External Trustee **(HS)**
Emma Wedge, External Trustee **(EW)**
Penelope Hackett, External Trustee **(PH)**
Mikey Brown, Postgraduate Student Trustee **(MB)**
Mitali Gohel, External Trustee **(MG)**
Simone Hawley, BAME Student Trustee **(SH)**
Umar Sabir, Undergraduate Student Trustee **(US)**
Harshitha Naidu, International Student Trustee **(HN)**
Neil Hanley, University Representative Trustee **(NH)**

In attendance
Jo Thomas, Chief Executive **(JT)**
Adam Sheridon, Director of Engagement **(AS)**
Nick Bailey, Director of Finance & Systems **(NB)**
James Lindsay, Director of Community & Representation **(JL)**
Emily Badger, Director of Operations **(EB)**
Amy Simon, Executive Assistant **(ASi)** (note taker)
Elliot Packham, Systems Development Manager **(EP)** (Agenda Item 8 only)

Apologies
Mark Price, External Trustee **(MP)**

The Chair welcomed all attendees. The meeting began at 18:00.

No	Item for Discussion	Notes	Action
1	**Minutes of Previous Meeting (12.01.26)**	The Chair presented the minutes of the previous meeting, dated 12th January 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 there were no pending actions. **The Board noted the Action Tracker.**	**Noted** **Noted** **Approved**

2b	**Declarations of Interest**	The Chair asked Trustees to declare any possible conflict of interests relating to the items on the meeting's agenda. No conflicts of interests were declared.	**Noted** **Noted**
3	**HR Committee Minutes (12.02.26)**	WCO presented the HR Committee Minutes (12.02.26) for the Board's approval. **The Board approved the HR Committee Minutes.**	**Noted** **Approved**
4	**Audit & Risk Committee Minutes (05.02.26)**	Education Officer presented Audit & Risk Committee Minutes (05.02.26) for the Board's approval. EO noted the meeting was in person and the Committee has agreed to have the next meeting in person. **The Board approved the Audit & Risk Committee Minutes.**	**Noted** **Noted** **Approved**
5	**Engagement Committee Minutes (24.02.26)**	AEO noted the Engagement Committee Minutes (24.02.26) for the Board's approval. AEO noted engagement with Community Pantry has tripled. AEO noted the link to demonstrate interest in a new student group has gone live and this has benefited the Activities Committee. AEO noted a 33% increase in Room Bookings, and it was noted that the cultural societies tend to use University rooms. **The Board approved the Engagement Committee Minutes.**	**Noted** **Noted** **Noted** **Noted** **Approved**
6	**CEO Report**	JT presented the CEO Report for the Board's information. JT noted best practice visits and preparations for Compact. JT noted the NUS Student Loans Fees campaign and the Renter's Right Act is about to come into action. JT noted Guild Elections have ended. PH queried whether the Guild is asked to make a saving every year with respect to the upcoming Compact meeting and JT noted this is a recent occurrence. RP noted the Guild is advertising for an External and International Student Trustee/s. **The Board noted the CEO report.**	**Noted** **Noted** **Noted** **Noted** **Noted** **Noted** **Noted**
7	**Risk Register**	NB presented the Risk Register for the Board's approval. NB noted this item was approved at Audit and Risk Committee in February. NB noted some of the residual risks have moved from amber to green.	**Noted** **Noted** **Noted**

		MG queried whether the red risks have enough actions to move them to green. NB noted there are 57 risks, and many are financial and will therefore remain on the Register. MG noted the commercial risk has been on the Register for several years and queried whether it can be broken down into smaller components. NB noted changes to the current that are underway commercially and that commercial stability (JDW) is required before the risk changes. MG queried whether any risks can move to amber to highlight progress and improvement. NB noted that Venues was previously a major income contributor, but this position has plateaued in recent years. MG suggested a narrative be added to highlight the positive movement. EW noted some risks may always stay red due to the Guild's appetite for risk. NB noted the Risk Register contains a table which reflects how risks are reviewed. PH noted a concern regarding risks that do not change after mitigating actions have been taken such as the trading action risk. PH queried whether the risk be modified after steady income from JDW. NB noted a period of stability will allow the Guild to bridge the funding gap and reduce the risk. NB further noted certain risks such as Health and Safety will remain on the risk register as amber due to the risk always needing to be managed. PH queried whether there are other mitigating controls that can be put into place to reduce the risk. MB noted the likelihood of risks needs to reduce even if the impact is high. MB noted if the mitigating controls do not reduce the likelihood, then there is an issue. NB noted risks are scored out of 25 and a score of 9 will trigger an amber score. MB queried whether student groups will always be an amber risk. NB noted there are multiple controls in place for groups, however due to the lack of continuity due to the group's membership changing year on year, this still presents as a risk. EW queried whether the risks should be higher if the mitigations do not decrease the impact. RP noted the Risk Register has been approved by A&R. HS noted that the all the red risks are noted as separate items on the agenda. RP requested that the Risk Register will return to Audit and Risk to be reviewed again in relation to the further narrative on the red risks and the mitigating controls **The Board approved the Risk Register pending further narrative provision.**	**Noted** **NB** **Noted** **Noted** **Noted** **Noted** **NB** **Noted**
8	**Engagement & Participation Update**	EP presented the Engagement & Participation Update for the Board's information.	**Noted**

		EP noted the criteria for Unique Student Engagement. EP noted 23,496 students were engaged, and this is a 9% increase from 2025-2026. EP noted more than 10,900 votes were cast in the Officer Elections 2026. EP noted an increase in popularity to Community Breakfast and Accommodation events. EP noted a 21% increase in PG students' engagement, 9% in UG students and 5% PGT students. EP noted the Guild's engagement rate is higher than the University's rate of increase of student numbers. EP noted a focus on engaging international students. EP noted the number of members in Student Groups is more than 13,000 students as of 31st December and that the Guild met the end of year target in February 2026. HS queried whether there is breakdown date regarding commuter students. EP noted this data is not received from the University, however there is data on distance-learners. RP queried what conversations are being had regarding international student engagement. EP noted Chinese Students are the largest group of international students, and that the Guild hosted a Mid-Autumn Moon Festival celebration and there are plans to host more Lunar New Year events. EP noted the Chinese students engage well with activity-based socials. RP queried how the Guild is exploring what the Chinese community requires. JL noted Town Halls are hosted for students to give them more of a voice within accommodation. JL noted accommodation university services use WeChat and some student staff also aid with ideas to interact the Chinese Community. **The Board noted the Engagement & Participation Update.**	**Noted** **Noted** **Noted** **Noted** **Noted** **Noted** **Noted** **Noted**
9	**Annual Survey & Strategy Response**	EB presented the Annual Survey & Strategy Response for the Board's information. EB noted the budgeting process has started, and departments are actively reviewing KPIs. EB noted in depth focus groups regarding Cost of Living (CoL) had taken place to review survey feedback. EB noted we are in Year 4 of the operating plan, and the team is reviewing KPT performance, in year performance to date, new KPIs and updates to the objectives. EB noted risks and challenges such as budget and likely savings to be made in Year 5. EB noted Year 5 strategy will be further developed after Compact, and in-year savings are still being made. EB noted the new Strategy Development review is pending and will continue once there is clarity on the Guild's financial position. EB noted feedback from the Officers has been received. EB noted a more detailed strategy development timeline will return to Board in May as	**Noted** **Noted** **Noted** **Noted** **Noted**

		well as a draft of the Year 5 operating plan and an approach for research.	**EB**
		PH queried whether the lower wellbeing outcome is due to lack of publicity over Cost of Living services or do students know and they do not feel the services benefit. EB noted the KPIs were new when developed and have not been in action for a long time. Some research KPIs have low baselines and high targets. Most KPIs are linked to budget funding. JL noted the KPIs are focused on behaviour change, and this can be a challenge regarding connecting students with the service. JL further noted the services have resources and good engagement when students show they need the systems. The focus is on connecting the day-to-day needs with larger societal changes.	**Noted**
		MB queried how CoL impacts can be measured and what the priorities are. EB noted some development ideas have been discussed and will come to the Board for further review.	**Noted**
		MG queried how the priorities from 'bottom up' marry with the 'top down' university priorities. EB noted it was top down and includes research and reviews. JT noted the strategy was written during Covid and based on a pre-Covid world. Before this strategy development, previous strategies have all been a 3-year duration. MG queried whether a 3-year plan should be considered again and JT noted this should be discussed further, whilst understanding the University framework. EB noted a 5-year strategy can be difficult for the Officers to work with as relevancy can be ever changing. EW noted this specific strategy was more hardwired than normal to align funding.	**Noted**
		HS queried whether there is a breakdown of the groups that do not feel represented or qualitative responses. EB noted there are qualitative questions, but they may not be directly tied to a lack of representation. EB further noted that those who feel less represented are typically less engaged. This will be reviewed in the next strategy e.g. commuter and disabled students.	**Noted**
		RP noted a 5-year budget is good but could mean less flexibility and less input of future Officer opinions and student needs to the strategy, especially in later years. WCO noted linking work to the aims can be difficult especially as it was written pre-Covid. IO noted the strategy generalises students such as international students vs home students vs commuter students as they all have diverse needs. Identifying the different groups increases representation and engagement.	**Noted**
		NH noted we are living in a different time to when the original strategy was written and now is the time to review the strategy and be bold with changes. NH noted the annual Compact will remain and that there will not be major changes to University targets and goals. NH noted the Guild's main strategic aim is the partnership with the university.	**Noted**
		MG queried when the strategy needs to be finalised. RP noted the next iteration of the strategy plan will go live in August 2027.	**Noted**

		The Board noted the Annual Survey & Strategy Response.	**Noted**
10	**JDW Project Update**	AS presented the JDW Project Update for the Board's information. AS noted build works have commenced. AS noted the Capital costs are estimated to be £18k net negative compared to the original budget at this stage. AS noted a stakeholder meeting is taking place tomorrow, and the current works are all on plan. AS noted the Pub and Kitchen Manager vacancies are live. AS further noted the Buddy Training is planned to include key student staff. EO noted training and buddy hours for student staff is a good idea. EO noted the student staff HR communications timing. AS noted the delayed confirmation of Build dates resulted in tight deadlines in sending out communications to core and student staff. AS noted that an error in communication had been corrected. AS further noted the Venues team were aware to direct queries to the HR email inbox for response. EB noted the number of queries was relatively low. AS noted multiple staff are under currently consultation and the correct processes need to be followed. NH queried the involvement of DARO and whether there is a donor who could donate art. AS noted the team has found historic photos in the Guild and Cadbury Library has been contacted for artwork. HS and MG queried how the wider communications were received. AEO noted that updates were well received by students. **The Board noted the JDW Project Update.**	**Noted** **Noted** **Noted** **Noted** **Noted** **Noted** **Noted** **Noted**
11	**Officer 2026 Elections**	JL presented the Officer 2026 Elections update. JL noted 10,759 students voted, which was 1,413 more students than last year, and is 22.6% of the student population. JL noted there were over 100 students were on the ballot as candidates. JL noted incentives were in place for the second year and some were repeated (Grad Ball Priority Pass & Discount) and some were new (£1000 cash prize). JL noted an additional paper will be presented at a future Board meeting with more details provided. HS noted the voting process can take over 20 minutes to complete, so the number of voters is especially impressive. PGO noted the voting process took him 35 minutes. JT noted a big thank you to the Teams who supported the election process. **The Board noted the Officer 2026 Elections update.**	**Noted** **Noted** **Noted** **Noted** **Noted** **Noted** **Noted**

12	**Referendum Update**	The Chair opened the floor to discuss the Referendum postponement.	**Noted**
		RP noted the Referendum which is voting on the Guild's affiliation with the NUS was due to run at the same time as the main elections. This was postponed due to concerns raised by President on 6th March 2026, and a copy of the email had been previously circulated to Trustees. RP noted that concerns had been raised regarding the Referendum Regulations and Campaigning Guidance.	**Noted**
		RP noted there was a requirement for the Regulations to be updated, and JL confirmed that the previous Referendum was in 2023 and the practice is to review the Regulations before each Referendum. JL noted that a review of Regulations had commenced in November and explained that there are fewer references in the Guild Byelaws regarding Referendums in comparison to Elections.	**Noted**
		RP suggested that the Regulations should be approved by the Board. EW queried whether these should be approved by the Returning Officer. AS noted that the Education Act 1994 outlines that University Council has a duty related to democratic processes. JL noted the Byelaws state the Guild must have Election regulations, and that these cannot be approved by the Board due to a possible conflict of interest as there may be Trustees who are eligible to be elected. On this basis, this would be the same approach for a Referendum as certain students and Officers may have political standing.	**Noted**
		MB noted that the Regulations should have been considered before a Referendum and queried why there were not standing Regulations. JL noted they were not reviewed since 2023 due to capacity and team focus. AS noted, that Election Regulations are updated annually as a matter of good practice, and further noted that the Referendum documents are not used with the same frequency.	**Noted**
		MB noted there could be an issue with amending Regulations after a Referendum is called with the logical approach to make amendments and review the regulations as soon as the idea of a Referendum is raised.	**Noted**
		JL noted three options had been presented to the Guild Officer Group (GOG) for the date of Referendum. One of these options aligned with the Elections period, and the other two dates were after the exam period, and the Election period had been selected. JL further noted that the team had reviewed how the Regulations of both the Referendum and Election processes would interact with each other as they are not the same process, and that this review had taken longer than expected.	**Noted**
		President noted her understanding that the Referendum regulations had been amended to align with the Election regulations and queried why this change was made as the need to align the regulations is not in the Byelaws.	**Noted**
		President further noted that the complete updated regulations were not published until Friday before the Referendum was due to go live. President noted that she enquired how to set up campaigns but	**Noted**

		received no response and these concerns meant there was a lack of confidence in the Referendum process going live. AS noted the Articles of Association reference the Council's responsibility to ensure processes are democratic. AS noted, the Legal Services department were made aware of the two concurrent democratic processes as the Deputy Nominee for the Returning Officer. AS noted the Guild was aware that election candidates were likely to campaign in the Referendum. AS noted that NUS are the nominee for Elections however they were stood down due to the conflict of interest. EO queried why the option of having the Referendum during the Elections period was offered if it was too much work for the team to manage. JL noted the team supported the Referendum happening alongside the Elections period to maximise engagement and success of both democratic processes. JL noted the Regulations were published as soon as they were ready. MB noted the outstanding issue of what level of campaigning should be permitted. MB noted the model is to have two campaigns, one for each side and both funded. MB queried whether this is the standard the Guild would like to follow and whether the current regulations allow for this approach. MB queried whether student groups and Officers can campaign and if this is a decision for the Board. MB noted the idea is to make the regulations as permissible as possible and to make a clear justification for any restrictions. EW queried who the Returning Officer was. AS confirmed he was the Returning Officer, and the Student Voice Manager was the Deputy Returning Officer. EW suggested a process that highlights who approves regulations should be drafted. EW further noted the Board is responsible for ensuring the Guild is democratic and noted the Byelaws should be updated to reflect these additional processes and clearly state who is responsible for signing off Regulations. JT noted the Byelaws are expected to come to the Board in May and University Council in June. It was agreed that options for the referendum approach be submitted to the Board between meetings and following this regulations guidance and Byelaws would be updated. **The Board noted the Referendum update.**	 **Noted** **Noted** **Noted** **Noted** **JT/JL** **Noted**
13	**Delegation of Authority**	NB noted the Delegation of Authority for the Boards approval. **The Board approved the Delegation of Authority.**	**Noted** **Approved**
14	**Democracy Operations**	JL noted the Democracy Operations update for the Board's information. **The Board noted the Democracy Operations update**.	**Noted** **Approved**
15	**AOB (Any Other Business)**	PH queried whether any action needed to be taken in terms of student wellbeing considering the meningitis incident in Kent. JT noted meetings are taking place and the University is taking relevant action and will link with Public Health.	**Noted**

		JT thanked ASi on her final Board meeting and also congratulated MG on her pregnancy.	**Noted**
16	**Meeting Reflection**	No items noted.	**Noted**

The Chair closed the meeting at 20:05.

Date of Next Meeting: Monday 11th May 2026