

Trustee Board Meeting

Monday 5th September 2022,
Mandela Room, Guild of Students, 17:45 – 20:00

Present

Robert Smeath, External Trustee **(RS)** (Chair)
 Acacia Matthews, Guild President **(President)**
 Benjamin Lockley, Postgraduate Officer **(PGO)**
 Vanessa Chigariro, Education Officer **(EO)**
 Florence Craddock, Sports Officer **(SO)**
 Tinajie (Alice) Liu, International Officer **(IO)**
 Reeve Isaacs-Smith, Welfare & Community Officer **(WCO)**
 Isobel Lawson, Activities & Employability Officer **(AEO)**
 Kantai Melau, Student Trustee **(KM)**
 Akram Nazir, Student Trustee **(AN)**
 Henrietta Brealey, External Trustee **(HB)**
 Ian Pain, External Trustee **(IP)**
 Johnny Davis, External Trustee **(JD)**

In attendance

Jo Thomas, Chief Executive **(JT)**
 Adam Sheridan, Director of Engagement **(AS)** (Agenda Items 1-8 only)
 Nick Bailey, Head of Finance **(NB)** (Agenda Items 1-8 only)
 Sam Harris, NUS Charity Deputy Director (SH) (Agenda Item 0 only)
 Sam Jones, Executive Assistant **(SJ)** (note taker)

Apologies

Erica Conway, University Representative Trustee **(EC)**
 Alicia Wickert, Postgraduate Student Trustee **(AW)**
 Serabi Opiyo, BAME Student Trustee **(SEO)**
 Emma Wedge, External Trustee **(EW)**
 Yinbo Yu, External Trustee **(YY)**

The Chair welcomed all attendees and the meeting began at 17:45

No	Item For Discussion	Notes	Action
0	NUS Visit	SH joined the meeting at 17:45	Noted
		SH introduced themselves as the Deputy Director of NUS Charity.	Noted
		SH updated the Board on the restructure of NUS in 2019 into two distinct legal bodies, noting that NUS Charity primarily served the Students' Union movement with services and training, while NUS UK served students directly. SH noted the Guild's annual contribution to NUS which is split between the two bodies.	Noted
		SH noted the support services provided to Students' Unions by NUS Charity, including the Quality Students' Unions scheme, staff training and recruitment, the senior manager's network and other communities	

		<p>of practice, annual officer training and support, Elections returning Officer support and the 'Best Bar None' accreditation scheme.</p> <p>SH noted the work of NUS UK, including a digital platform for students to feed into campaigning and lobbying work, liaising with national press and leading the national student movement through its elected national Officer team, and discount offers for students. SH noted the long history of the NUS in contributing to social progress in the UK, including the movement for LGBTQ+ rights.</p> <p>SH updated the Board on developments with anti-Semitism allegations made against NUS UK between March and April 2022, after which two investigations were launched into anti-Semitism within NUS UK as QC led reviews. SH noted that an open call for evidence had now closed, and the investigation into previous actions by the current NUS President was currently in progress. SH noted that both investigations had been conducted in consultation with the Union of Jewish Students.</p> <p>SH updated the Board on NUS's recent work on the cost of living crisis for students, which would be the focus of national campaigning work for the coming academic year. SH noted the importance of national collective action by students affected by cost of living pressures and inflation.</p> <p>The President asked about the progress of the investigation into the NUS President. SH noted that the investigation was currently active and they were therefore unable to comment, however NUS had committed to actioning all of the final recommendations of the independent QC-led review. SH noted that the two investigations were likely to be finalised at different times. The President asked for clarification about the final information from the investigation that would be made public. SH noted that due to confidentiality within an employment case, many of the details were likely to remain confidential.</p> <p>JD asked for clarity regarding the number of 350,000 active supporters of the NUS over the last year, as quoted in the presentation. SH noted that this figure included individual students across the country who had engaged with NUS campaigning activity both online and in person.</p> <p>JD asked about progress on NUS's cost of living campaign. SH noted that the first campaign meeting had been held the previous week and was in its early stages, but progressing quickly as students returned to University for the new year.</p> <p>The President asked about the long-term credibility of NUS in the student movement, noting proposals disaffiliation at several UK Students Unions . SH noted that several disaffiliation campaigns were ongoing, and further referenda maybe likely following the outcome of both investigations.</p> <p>HB joined the meeting at 18:05.</p> <p>The WCO asked about NUS's plans to support Jewish students within NUS. SH noted that NUS was planning a number of support</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> <p>Noted</p>
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		<p>mechanisms to re-engage and support Jewish Students, but these would be led by the recommendations of the independent review. SH noted that NUS was in regular consultation and contact with the Union of Jewish Students.</p> <p>The PGO noted that, in their view, an outcome which did not recommend the removal of the current NUS President from Office was likely to be seen as unsatisfactory in the student movement. SH noted that NUS was not able to pre-empt the outcome of the investigation, however NUS Board had consistently committed to enact the final recommendations. The PGO noted their view that national campaigning activity on the cost of living crisis would be detrimentally affected while the current NUS President remained in office.</p> <p>The President noted their concern about the current poor relationship between NUS and the UK Government and Department for Education. SH updated the Board on the NUS's engagement with Government.</p> <p>The PGO noted their concern about the general dissatisfaction with NUS in the wider student movement. RS asked about NUS's plans to re-engage with Students' Unions. SH that NUS was continuing to focus on campaigning work on the cost of living and consult with member unions on next steps, but was not pre-empting the outcomes of the reviews.</p> <p>The Board thanked SH for their time. SH left the meeting at 18:15.</p> <p>The Board noted the NUS Visit presentation.</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p>
1	Minutes of Previous Meetings (04.07.22)	<p>The Chair presented the previous minutes, dated the 4th July 2022, for the Board's approval.</p> <p>The Board noted that the last meeting had not been quorate, however the minutes and decisions from the meeting had subsequently been agreed by an email resolution by a majority of Trustees, dated 8th July 2022.</p> <p>The Board approved the previous minutes as an accurate record of the meeting.</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Approved</p>
2	Matters Arising	<p>The Chair presented the Trustee Board action tracker, noting three outstanding actions.</p> <p>NB noted that the Guild had agreed a tribunal date for its case with HMRC, as the 11th - 13th October. NB noted that the tribunal was expected to go ahead with all witnesses contributing. NB updated the Board on the five witnesses and noted that the likelihood of the Guild's success was still estimated at 50%.</p> <p>RS asked about the impact on the Guild's operations of senior staff being involved in the tribunal. NB noted that the Guild was likely to rearrange the planned Audit & Risk Committee meeting in October to later in the month.</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p>

3	Officer Action Plans	<p>The Full-Time Officers presented their action plans for the year ahead, based on their election manifesto commitments, for the Board's information and scrutiny.</p> <p>The AEO updated their plans to create a refreshed online hub for society committee members, reduce single use plastics in the Guild and expand the 'chill-out' room at Guild club nights for welfare and accessibility reasons, in collaboration with the Disabled Students Association. The AEO noted their plans for a new clothes swap event to save students money and reduce new clothing usage, a new society ball, and changes to the Guild's Grad Ball to make it more financially accessible.</p> <p>RS noted the value the online society hub, adding to the Guild's digital offer to students. RS suggested including engagement with the platform in the Guild's monitoring in the future.</p> <p>The EO updated the Board on their plans for new guidance documents to the Guild, and society vouchers for Birmingham International Academy Students to join one Guild society for free. The EO noted ambitions to expand the scheme in future years to all students, with funding sourced from the University. The EO noted plans for more support and rewards for student reps at the Guild, a new 'EDI townhall' event with the University's EDI director, and a range of changes to education policy at the University including the extenuating circumstances process.</p> <p>AN asked about plans to engage with medical student reps. The EO noted their aim for the Guild to contribute to the MDS rep scheme training in collaboration with the college and build a stronger relationship with medical school staff.</p> <p>The IO updated the Board on plans to continue and expand introduction session and events for international students at the Birmingham International Academy as they returned to campus in large numbers following the removal of COVID-19 restrictions. The IO noted plans for a range of welcome events for international students in welcome week 2022, focusing on increasing their engagement in the Guild's structures. The IO noted new conduits for sharing information with international students, including new printed guides and videos, and through social media platforms which were popular abroad. The IO updated the Board on plans for language café events in semester one, where students could practice their language skills. The IO noted plans to repeat the One World Fair event in January 2022 as part of UoBE Festival.</p> <p>RS noted the importance of sharing more content on the Guild's engagement with international students as the year progressed.</p> <p>The PGO updated the Board on their plans to re-establish the Guild's postgraduate society during welcome week, create a joint timetable of events for postgraduate students with the University's graduate school and formulate a new 'rate your landlord' scheme for students, and move forward with plans to pay all Guild student staff the living wage. The PGO noted plans for a wider conversation about wage rates for staff</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>
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4	CEO Report	<p>JT presented the CEO Report, for the Board's information.</p> <p>JT noted a number of vacancies on the Guild's Committee's, noting expressions of interest from KM and SEO to join Audit & Risk Committee and HR Committee respectively. The Board approved the appointment of KM to Audit & Risk Committee, and SEO to HR Committee.</p> <p>JD asked about ongoing staff recruitment in the current labour market. JT noted that recruitment had been more difficult in some areas, particularly in commercial operations but the Guild was working with a number of external agencies. JT noted that the Guild was now beginning to see a rise in staff moving jobs similar to the movement other organisations had begun to witness last year.</p> <p>RS noted the value of HR Committee reviewing staff retention in light of current job market conditions. JT noted possible opportunities for retaining more graduating student staff as core staff in future.</p> <p>JT noted that the date of the Coroner's inquest into the death of a student on campus in March 2022 had been brought forward. The Board discussed the organisation's response to the incident, noting the legally privileged aspect of information and the process of the upcoming inquest.</p> <p>The Board noted the CEO Report.</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>Approved</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p>

5	Strategy and KPI's Update	<p>JT presented the Strategy and KPI's Update, for the Board's information.</p> <p>JT noted that an additional operating plan document would be circulated to the Board.</p> <p>JT noted that the Guild's strategic plan was now well underway and had been published in August 2022. JT noted that a presentation would be delivered to the full Guild Staff team on the strategic plan ahead of welcome week, and a strategic dashboard would be created to track metrics as they progressed.</p> <p>RS asked about ongoing conversations with the University about the requirements for future annual reporting on the Guild's five-year funding settlement. JT noted that further information from the University was expected to be shared shortly.</p> <p>JD noted the importance of focusing on several key KPI metrics in discussions with the University, and for the organisation to focus resources on strategic delivery over the monitoring of data.</p> <p>RS noted the importance of monitoring International and Postgraduate student engagement. JT noted plans for digitising strategic tracking. The President noted a new dedicated position in the Student Voice team for supporting postgraduate and international engagement work.</p> <p>The Board noted the Strategy and KPI's Update.</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>JT/EB</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p>
6	Annual Health & Safety Report	<p>AS presented the Annual Health & Safety Report, for the Board's approval.</p> <p>AS noted that responsibility for Health and Safety sat with the Trustees, however this was delegated to the Chief Executive and other members of staff such as the Facilities Manager on a day to day basis.</p> <p>AS noted the transfer of reporting responsibility for the Guild's Health & Safety Committee from HR Committee to Audit & Risk Committee.</p> <p>AS updated the Board on significant incidents in the last academic year, including two serious incidents on the Guild's staircases. AS noted ongoing building work on stairwells.</p> <p>The Board approved the Annual Health & Safety Report.</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Approved</p>
7	NSS Report 2022	<p>JT presented the NSS Report 2022, for the Board's information.</p> <p>JT noted that the University's NSS satisfaction scores had improved in 2022 compared to 2021 by 2.82% overall, with recorded figures higher in all areas apart from feedback and assessment and student voice, where both figures remained below the national average. JT noted that Question 26 of the NSS, which discussed the Guild of Students, and has increased in satisfaction by 5.43% to 48.9%.</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p>

		<p>JT noted that the NSS survey also included a number of free-text comments, some of which the Guild was mentioned. JT noted that analysis of the content of the free-text comments was ongoing, however many mentioned dissatisfactions with the bureaucracy of the Guild and its representation functions. The Board discussed areas of bureaucracy in the organisation. RS noted the value of further digitisation of services to reduce bureaucracy.</p> <p>JT noted the Guild's continued lobbying of the University to reintroduce questions from the NSS optional bank. The AEO noted a possible question related to events offered by the Students' Union. JT to review.</p> <p>The Board noted the NSS Report 2022.</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>JT</p> <p>Noted</p>
8	Community Wardens Strategy Development	<p>JT presented the Community Wardens Strategy Development.</p> <p>The WCO updated the Board on changes to the work cycle for the Community Wardens scheme, with the aim to better incorporate student feedback and respond to changes in-year.</p> <p>The WCO updated the Board on plans for a new 'Community Pantry' service, similar to a foodbank on campus, hosted in the Guild to support students affected by the cost of living crisis.</p> <p>Due to limitations of time, the Board requested that the report was reviewed by Engagement Committee for further discussion and feedback. SJ to include on agenda.</p> <p>The Board noted the Community Wardens Strategy Development report would be reviewed by Engagement Committee.</p> <p>AS and NB left the meeting at 19:55.</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>SJ</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p>
9a	Governance Attendance Reports	<p>SJ presented the Governance Attendance Reports, for the Board's Information.</p> <p>SJ updated the Board on the attendance figures at the Trustee Board and its sub-committees for the 2021/22 academic year, noting that Trustee Board attendance had fallen to 80.6%, compared to 92.2% in 2020/21. SJ noted that this fall may be a result of the Board returning to in-person meetings, and was very similar to the pre-pandemic level of 81.2% in 2019/20.</p> <p>SJ noted that the last meeting of Trustees on the 4th July 2022 had not been quorate, which had never happened before.</p> <p>SJ updated the Board on the attendance figures for Finance, HR and Audit & Risk Committee's over the last 12 months, all of which had fallen slightly. SJ noted that attendance at Finance Committee was down significantly, from 90% in 2020/21, to 76.7% in 2021/22.</p> <p>The Board discussed the attendance figures and RS noted that the Board should continue to meet in person as far as possible.</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p>

		<p>The SO noted attendance at a number of democratic committees had reduced in the last year, and meetings had often not met quoracy. JT noted that issues with the Guild's democratic committees would be reviewed in the wider democracy review.</p> <p>The Board noted the Governance Attendance Reports.</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p>
9b	Good Governance Update	<p>SJ presented the Good Governance Update, for the Board's information.</p> <p>SJ updated the Board on plans for a Good Governance Task & Finish Group, to review the outputs of the most recent Board and Committee Effectiveness surveys in June and July 2022. SJ noted two vacancies for Trustees on the group, which would meet over the forthcoming months.</p> <p>SJ updated the Board on plan for a tri-lateral governance review together with two other peer students' unions in early 2023, and an expected internal audit from the University in March 2023.</p> <p>The Board Approved the Good Governance Update.</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Approved</p>
10	Appointments Panel Report	<p>JT presented the Appointments Panel Report, for the Board's information.</p> <p>JT updated the Board on two rounds of successful Trustee recruitment in 2021/22, appointing four new Trustees to the Board.</p> <p>RS noted the importance of focusing on the EDI balance of the Board in upcoming rounds of Trustee recruitment.</p> <p>The Board noted the Appointments Panel Report.</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p>
11	AOB (Any Other Business)	<p>The PGO noted some trade union activity by Unison had taken place in the building over the last few weeks. The PGO asked if the Guild had a Union recognition agreement. JT confirmed that the Guild did not currently have a union recognition agreement in place.</p> <p>RS noted that this was the last meeting for HB, who was stepping down as a Trustee after three years in post. The Board thanked HB for their contribution over the last three years and wished them all the best for the future.</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p>
12	Meeting Reflection	No items noted.	Noted

The Chair closed the meeting at 20:10.

Date of Next Meeting:

Monday 31st October 2022, 18:00 – 20:00 in the Mandela Room, Guild of Students.