



Ollscoil
Teicneolaíochta
an Atlantaigh

Atlantic
Technological
University

Minutes of the 19th ATU Governing Body Meeting Held on Monday 2nd October 2023 at 9.30am Letterkenny Boardroom and MS Teams

Present:

Maura McNally (Chairperson) – online	MMcN
Dr Orla Flynn (President) – in person	OF
Ursula Cox – in person	UC
Dara Foynes – online	DF
Michael Geoghegan – online	MG
Felim McNeela – online	FMcN
Dr Martin Robinson – in person	MR
Gareth Roe – in person	GR
Michael Gilvarry – online	MGil
Séamus Hughes – in person	SH
Patricia King – online	PK
Dr Brian McCann – online	BMcC
Mary McGinley - online	MMcG
Anne McHugh – in person	AMcH
Oonagh Monahan – online	OM
Jeremiah Egberongbe – online	JE
Barry Breslin – online	BB
Sarah Mohan – in person	SM
David Minton – online	DM

In attendance:

Jim Fennell (Secretary) – in person	JF
Carol Geraghty (Recording Secretary) – in person	CG
██████████ O'Flynn Oxley Solicitors – online – Agenda Item 4.1	██████████
Michael Heneghan – online – Agenda Item 5.1	MH
Elizabeth McCabe – online – Agenda Item 5.1.2	EMcC
Deirdre Johnson – in person – Agenda Item 5.1.2	DJ
Des Foley – in person – Agenda Item 8.3	DFol
Sean Duffy – online – Agenda Item 8.4 & 8.5	SD
Billy Bennett – in person – Agenda Item 9	BB
Michael Hannon – in person – Agenda Item 10.2	MHan

Apologies:

Prof. Rachel Ashworth	RA
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GB 019.01 Declaration of Conflicts of Interests

There were no conflicts of interest declared at the meeting.

GB 019.02 Approval of Governing Body Minutes

GB 019.02.1 Minutes of 4th September 2023

At section GB 0018.04.6 it was agreed that “eligibility of part-time students to qualify for scholarships to be clarified as part of the operation.” would be included.

Decision The minutes were approved subject to the above amendment on the proposal of BMcC and seconded by DF.

GB 019.03 Matters arising and correspondence.

GB 019.03.00 Sponsorship Schedule October 2023

The sponsorship schedule was circulated to highlight a legacy GMIT partnership with Connaught Rugby ATU Galway-Mayo School of Science which was put in place for three years to 31st August 2024.

GB 019.03.01 Governing Body Log of Action Items

The log of actions items was reviewed. The log has been colour coded to denote the prioritisation of actions. It was agreed that Item 33 be changed to medium priority.

GB 019.04 Items for Approval

GB 019.04.1 Establishment of a Designated Activity Company (DAC) with presentation from Legal advisors O’ Flynn Exhams (OFX)

██████████ O’Flynn Exhams solicitors, joined the meeting at 9.43.

██████████ took the members through the Briefing Note and proposed constitution which had been circulated to members prior to the meeting. The steps to setting up the DAC are (1) submit the proposed DAC constitution and a business case to the Minister; (2) when approval is received from the Minister, set-up DAC; (3) register DAC as a charity.

OF advised that the Department may not approve sections 4.13 & 4.14, which reference loans, as there is n borrowing framework current in place for TU’s.

OF and JF confirmed that initially ATU staff will provide administration support to the DAC. It is hoped that this will evolve over time and eventually the DAC will have the means to support its own staff. Accounts for the DAC will be submitted with ATU accounts. The ARC will have oversight of the DAC. It is anticipated that this detail will be included in the business case for the DAC. The ATU Code of Governance will apply to the DAC.

The meeting approved the draft constitution subject to the following amendments:

1. Reference to student accommodation in clause 3.
2. Deletion of the requirement to seek Ministerial/An TÚdarás approval in paragraph 4
3. Reference to student accommodation in paragraph 4.4 and 4.6.

UC informed members that on 21st September the Minister announced a mechanism to allow TU’s to provide student accommodation, this is welcomed. OF stated that a national Working Group has been set-up and is looking at options such as standardised design, HMcG is the ATU representative. It

was requested that MMcN would convey a sense of urgency in progressing this initiative to the Minister. There was some discussion about the impact that availability and affordability of student accommodation is having on sourcing undergraduate and post graduate International students.

left the meeting at 10.23.

- **Decision** Subject to the above amendments to the constitution, the meeting approved the submission of the amended constitution of the DAC to the Minister together with a supporting business case on the proposal of MMcN and seconded by UC.
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- **Action** Include an update from the International Office on the Agenda for the November meeting.

GB 019.04.2 Amendment to legal agreement with St Angela's College

Legal Agreement between ATU, STACs and the Ursuline Order with amended clause was considered by the meeting for approval.

- **Decision** The amendment was approved on the proposal of MMcN and seconded by BMcC.

GB 019.04.3 Governing Body Workplan (September 2023 – August 2024)

JF presented the Governing Body Workplan to the members. AMcH advised that this document is used by the ARC and is very useful. OM requested an amendment to the September workplan to reflect approval of fee schedule.

- **Decision** Work plan is regarded as a work in progress and be included in papers for future GB meetings on the proposal of AMcH and seconded by DF.

GB 0019.04.4 Establishment of Strategic Development Subcommittee

OF presented the TOR for the Strategic Development Subcommittee to the members. OM will chair this subcommittee.

- **Decision** The Terms of Reference of the Strategic Development Subcommittee were approved on the proposal of MG and seconded by OM.
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- **Action** Strategic Development Subcommittee to consider external membership and bring a proposal to GB re same.

GB 019.05 Committee & Subcommittee Updates

GB 0019.05.1 Report from Audit & Risk committee 12th September 2023

MH joined the meeting at 10.45.

AMcH presented the report from the Audit & Risk Committee meeting of 12th September 2023.

The ARC intends to discuss at its next meeting whether it will have oversight of ICT security or if it will be recommended that this be under another subcommittee.

- **Action** ARC recommendation re ICT oversight to be presented to GB in November.

AMcH advised the meeting that the ARC will consider the ATU Bad Debt policy at its next meeting and will be making recommendations to the Governing Body.

- **Action** ARC recommendation re bad debt policy to be presented to GB.

AmcH advised the members that the risk rating associated with the Sligo DAC has been increased on the Risk Register due to cashflow difficulties being experienced by the DAC.

JF advised the meeting that the funding model employed by EI provides funding after the expenditure has been incurred and therefore the DAC must fund the expenditure in the short-term. TUs cannot lend to a DAC and the Sligo DAC appears to be unable to borrow money.

A due diligence report on the DAC has been requested from the Board of Directors of the DAC.

AMcH thanked the President for her attendance at the September ARC meeting.

GB 019.05.1.1 Response to HEA on Annual Governance Statement

The draft response was considered by the meeting and it was agreed that the report to the GB on procurement will be every four months rather than quarterly to be consistent with the financial reporting periods already agreed.

- **Decision** The Response to HEA on Annual Governance Statement with the above amendment was approved on the proposal of MMcN and seconded by FMcN.

GB 019.05.1.2 Bad Debt Write-off

EMcC joined the meeting at 10.45.

EMcC presented the ATU bad debt update circulated with papers.

The meeting expressed concern about the level of bad debt write off being proposed and noted that the Audit & Risk Committee will be considering the Bad debt policy at its next meeting.

The meeting also requested additional information be provided prior to the Governing Body approving the bad Debt write off.

- **Action** Additional information to be presented at November GB Meeting
- Summary of actions taken to recover debt in legacy institutes.
- Draft ATU policy & procedures on debt recovery.
- Provide more detail on Sligo debt
- Provide comparative bad debt figures from other TU's.
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GB 019.05.1.3 Staffing Headcount (ECF) Report

EMcC presented the Staffing Headcount Report circulated with papers.

- **Action** Report on Staffing Headcount to be added to GB Workplan. Future report should include a comparison with headcount of legacy Institutes.
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EMcC & MH left the meeting at 12.10.

GB 0019.05.2 Report from EDI Subcommittee

JMcC joined the meeting at 12.10.

JMcC presented the report from the 2021 EDI subcommittee meeting of 11th September and provided information about an EDI audit which has recently been completed. JMcC stated that a cross-functional working group will be required to implement findings from the EDI audit. There was a discussion about the remit of EDI with respect to mental health, how the needs of diverse students are assessed, challenges around availability of space for a course being run with EDI and DEIS schools and how funding related to EDI is allocated,

OF advised that a Head of Student Health & Wellbeing has recently been appointed.

BMcC thanked the EDI team for their work.

OM has joined the EDI Subcommittee

JMcC left the meeting at 12.25.

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GB 019.06 HEA Act 2022

GB 0019.06.1 Report from External Nominations Committee

OF summarised the information provided to members & stated that Competencies previously approved by GB have been included in the presentation. The Mazars advert is available on the ATU website, Mazars website and LinkedIn.

GB 019.07 Meeting of Governing Body members without executive

Meeting deferred to Monday 9th October @ 9.30am

GB 019.08 President's Report

GB 019.08.01 President's Update to Governing Body

OF updated the members on the University's activities since the meeting on 4th September and highlighted the System Performance Framework 2023-2028 launched by the HEA on 25th September and how this will impact the ATU Strategic Plan. The HEA System Performance Framework 2023-2028 sets out parameters under which higher education institutions will identify their unique contribution to the achievement of national strategic priorities and outcomes, as appropriate to their mission, scale, location, and strategic plan.

GB 019.08.02 UPT Minutes

Circulated with papers.

GB 019.08.03 Strategic Plan Update

DFol joined the meeting at 12.30.

DFol presented a summary of information previously given to GB and made reference as to how the parameters set out in the HEA System Performance Framework 2023-2028 will be incorporated into the strategic plan.

OM suggested that the definition of sustainability could be broader than environmental and could include student numbers, reputation, engagement in research & innovation, teaching & learning, etc. A copy of the presentation given by DF has been uploaded to the Governing Body SharePoint site.

OF highlighted that a step-change in how we perform as a University is key to achieving strategic goals including the focus on engagement with our region as well as in research & innovation activities. Our ability to generate funding through private philanthropy will be enabled through the establishment of the DAC, along with the establishment of an ATU Alumni Network, which will be launched on 6th October at the ATU Galway-Mayo Dublin Rd campus. OF provided information on European funding that is available to ATU through TU Research and Innovation Supporting Enterprise (TU RISE); ATU is bidding for funding of €20M over 4 years with the expectation that this will fund PhD scholarships and post-doc bursaries, as well as strengthening the research capacity across the ATU.

Members discussed whether it is possible to have the strategic plan reviewed by external experts before presenting it to HEA.

DFol gave information about plans to make the strategic plan more interactive e.g. including video rather than written introductions from the GB Chair and President, and inclusion of polls, etc.

- **Action:** Copy of strategic plan to be circulated to GB; external expert to provide specific feedback on the strategic plan.

AMcH left the meeting at 12.50.

MGil left the meeting at 1.10.

OF & DFol left the meeting at 1.15.

GB 019.08.04 St Angela's College Integration

SD joined the meeting at 1.15.

SD talked through the presentation circulated to members.

OM and MMcN asked that the congratulations of the GB be extended to everyone involved.

JF advised members that, as requested at the October GB meeting, the November Governing Body meeting will take place at the St Angela's campus on 6th November.

GB 019.08.05 Change Management and Organisation Design

SD talked through the presentation circulated to members. In response to a question about how long the Change Management and Organisation Design process will take and statements about the impact of a lack of final structure is having on resources and morale, SD advised that this stage is due to be finalised in November.

DF asked if ATU could consider using the term Chancellor instead of GB Chair.

- **Action** Further update on Change Management and Organisation Design in November.

- **Action** Check legal status of using the term Chancellor for Nov meeting.

SD left the meeting at 1.45.

GB 019.09 Report from Registrar

BB joined the meeting at 1.45

MGil rejoined the meeting at 1.45

GB 019.09.01 Academic Council Minutes 28 April 2023

BB summarised the decisions and actions documented in the Academic Council minutes of 14th June and 20th June which had been circulated to members.

GB 019.09.02 New Programmes approved at Academic Council

BB provided a list of all programmes approved at Academic Council during the 2022/2023 academic year, this included programmes at all levels from 6-10 including special purpose awards (SPA).

GB 019.09.03 Conferring dates & times 2023

BB provided the 2023 conferring dates and issued an invite to the GB Chair and all GB members to attend any and all conferring ceremonies.

GB 019.09.04 CAO Statistics

BB summarised the CAO statistics circulated to members, highlighting that 4 out of 5 students who received offers from ATU got their CAO 1st choice, this is higher than the national average and that the trend of opting for Level 8 programmes continues. ATU has seen an 8-9% growth in CAO offers for the 2023/2024 academic year.

GB 019.09.05 Student Profile Key Facts & Figures (March Census 2023)

BB summarised the information circulated to members. This document was produced by the ATU Reporting Office. ATU had 24,000 students in March 2023. ATU is now the university with the largest number of students outside of Dublin and 3rd biggest in Ireland after UCD and TU Dublin. BB clarified that the number of students reported is not whole time equivalent (WTE), this figure is available in a separate report prepared for Heads of Department. In response to a query about student retention, BB stated that there is a separate report and working group headed by Michelle Glacken dealing with this. In reply to a question about opportunities for growth, BB advised the meeting that individual schools and faculties are reviewing this and gave some information about a successful new undergraduate programme at the Mayo campus and challenges due to space constraints at other campuses.

- **Action** Report on Student Retention for GB.

BB left the meeting at 2.05.

GB 019.10 AOB

GB 019.10.01 Student Building Galway Campus

JF explained that HMcG, who was due to present on this item, was called away to attend a meeting with the President. Information available is that planning application is due to be submitted to Galway City Council in December 2023.

- **Action:** Update on all building plans for November GB.
- This should include Student Building on Galway Campus, update on purchase of land in Sligo and all other building plans with timelines and details of who is accountable for each project.

MHan joined the meeting at 2.20.

GB 019.10.02 Development of policy & procedures for student complaints

Mhan gave a presentation to members on the work of the Quality Assurance & Enhancement Team (QAET) who are managing the development of ATU quality policies and procedures. According to the current plan, the Complaints Policy is scheduled to be reviewed at the February Academic Council meeting and it is expected that legal advice will be sought when drafting this policy. Members expressed concern about the timeline and the need to protect the University from potential lawsuits by having a Complaints Policy in place as soon as possible. It was noted that pending development of new ATU-wide policies, the relevant legacy policies remain valid.

- **Action** QAET requested to seek legal opinion on Complaints Policy with report & draft policy to be presented to GB at November meeting.

OM left the meeting at 2.30.

SM left the meeting at 2.30.

MGil left the meeting at 2.30.

PK left the meeting at 2.35.

MHan left the meeting at 2.40.

OM rejoined the meeting at 2.40.

Honorary Awards Policy

- **Action** QAET requested to have Honorary Awards Policy ready for GB approval in December.

Security Services contract for Galway & Sligo

JF explained that HMCG, was also due to present on this item.

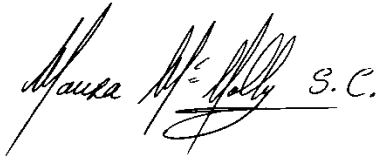
- **Decision** Security services contract for Galway and Sligo approved on the proposal of BMcC and seconded by MG.
- **Action** Information about reason for difference in value of contracts to be provided to GB for November meeting.

Governance Training

JF reminded members that Governance Training is scheduled for 9th October from 10.00 – 12.00.

Meeting Agenda

SH suggested that matters for approval should all be dealt with at the beginning of the meeting and asked if a timeline could be included for agenda items.



Signed: _____

Date: 08/11/2023

Chairperson