



Ollscoil  
Teicneolaíochta  
an Atlantaigh

Atlantic  
Technological  
University

## Minutes of the 28<sup>th</sup> ATU Governing Body Meeting

Held on Monday 4<sup>th</sup> November 2024 at 9.30am

St Angela's Campus and TEAMS

### Present:

Maura McNally – online	MMcN
Dr Orla Flynn (President) – in person	OF
Dara Foynes S.C. – online	DF
David Minton – online	DM
Dr Brian De Souza – in person	BDS
Dr John Bartlett – in person	JB
Dr Martin Robinson – online	MR
Joe Cunningham – in person	JC
John Daffy – in person	JD
Julia Bocianowska – online	JBoc
Kevin Sweeney – online	KS
Oonagh Monahan – online	OM
Regina Daly – in person	RD
Sarah Mohan – online	SM
Seamus Hughes – online	SH
Michael Gilvarry – online	MG

### In attendance:

Jim Fennell (Secretary) – in person	JF
Carol Geraghty (Recording Secretary) – in person	CG
Dr Billy Bennett – online – item 8	BB
Henry McGarvey – in person – items 4.3 & 5.2	HMCG

**Apologies:** Rachel Ashworth, Joanne Grehan

### GB 28.01 Meeting of External Members of Governing Body

Attendees: MMcN, JC, SH, MG, OM, DF, DM

### GB 28.06.1 Report from Meeting of External Members of Governing Body

MMcN presented a report from the meeting –

1. The meeting acknowledged the significant work done by staff since 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022 and all that has been achieved noting the size and geographic spread of the University.

2. Request that the Governing Body place more emphasis on strategic issues and decisions required for same rather than operational issues.
3. Requested an appendix system or summary of meeting papers to assist in effective decision making at meetings.

## **GB 28.02 Declaration of Conflicts of Interests**

No conflicts of interest were declared.

## **GB 28.04 Items for Approval**

### **GB 28.04.1 Appointment of Deputy Chair**

**Decision:** Oonagh Monahan was appointed as deputy chair on the proposal of MMcN, this was seconded by DM.

### **GB 28.04.2 Staff Appointment**

The following staff appointment was presented to Governing Body for approval:

[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]	[REDACTED]

**Decision:** The above post was approved on the proposal of JB and seconded by DM.

Governing Body members congratulated the executive on the recent announcement of ATU as a second provider of Veterinary Medicine education in Ireland [Atlantic Technological University announced as second provider of Veterinary Medicine education in Ireland | ATU - Atlantic Technological University](#). OF stated that this will be a 5-year full-time undergraduate programme with the first intake of students scheduled for September 2025, subject to the programme being developed & validated and funding being made available for the physical facilities to run the programme at the Letterkenny and Mountbellew campuses.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

### **GB 28.04.3 Execution of deeds of rectification & registration for lands at ATU Letterkenny Campus**

HMcG presented the paper on this matter.

**Decision:** The execution of deeds of rectification & registration for lands at ATU Letterkenny Campus was approved on the proposal of JB, this was seconded by BdS.

### **GB 28.05 Committee & Subcommittee Reports**

#### **GB 28.05.1 Report from Audit & Risk Committee (ARC)**

JC reported on the October ARC meeting.

Members thanked the Audit & Risk Committee for their work.

##### **GB 28.05.1.1 Risk Register**

JC reported that no individual risk has increased. There is one high risk related to the infrastructure required to provide a transformative university experience for students; it is anticipated that this will remain high as it is complex and mitigating actions are long-term. In response to questions about risks which are not included, JF stated that the risk register is a summary of functional risk registers compiled by central functions and faculties/schools and reviewed by UPT. Deloitte has provided training and feedback on the functional risk registers, and this feedback will inform the preparation of risk registers in future.

**Decision:** MMcN proposed that the Risk Register be approved, this was seconded by JB.

**Action:** Send any feedback on the risk register to UPT via the GB Secretary.

##### **GB 28.05.1.2 Internal Control Framework (ICF)**

JC advised that the Internal Control Framework (ICF) details strategic, operational, financial and compliance controls which tie into the University's approach to risk management. JC summarised the items discussed by ARC and advised that ARC will continue to monitor these controls and will report to Governing Body as required. JB requested that action 2.2.4 be updated to reference S.I. No. 674 of 2020 – Health & Safety Authority / Workplace Relations Commission Code of Practice 2020 and S.I. No. 106 of 2022 - Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Code of Practice 2022.

**Decision:** Subject to the addition detailed above, the Internal Control Framework (ICF) was approved on the proposal of OM, this was seconded by DF

### **GB 28.05.1.3 Review of Effectiveness of Anti-Fraud, Anti-corruption & Protected Disclosure Policy**

No incidents of corruption or protected disclosures have been made in the reporting period. One incident of fraud was reported, amounting to €2,273 and the Governing Body was advised of this in June 2024. Based on the information reviewed, it is the opinion of ARC that the University's Anti-Fraud, Anti-corruption & Protected Disclosure Policies have been effective to date.

**Decision:** The review of the effectiveness of the University's Anti-Fraud, Anti-corruption & Protected Disclosure Policies was approved on the proposal of MMcN, this was seconded by JD.

**Action:** Report to ARC re Garda investigation on fraud of €2,273.

### **GB 28.05.1.4 Sligo Leitrim ITS Regional Development Projects DAC – Letter from DFHERIS**

A letter from DFHERIS was circulated prior to the meeting, which states that DFHERIS is supportive of ATU's efforts to resolve issues with this DAC that arise from changes in legislation. OF met with representatives of DFHERIS to discuss the option of ATU withdrawing from the DAC, this was viewed favourably by DFHERIS. Members discussed the option of the purchase by the University of the DAC; the work of the DAC trading as the AIM Centre; the property occupied by the AIM Centre, and the impact of decisions about the DAC on staff. ATU is a shareholder in the DAC, [REDACTED]

**Action:** Seek legal advice on ATU withdrawing from this DAC.

### **GB 28.05.1.5 Response to HEA correspondence on AGS**

The correspondence from HEA on the Annual Governance Statement and draft response were circulated. Members discussed the section "Governing Body Meetings" and who should attend the private sessions of the Governing Body. JF advised that some years ago the Institute of Technology sector received professional guidance that this referred to external members of GB only and that former IoT's have carried this advice through to the newly formed technological universities. It was requested that the response to the Section "Governing Body Meeting" be updated to specify that the University has processes in place to ensure that two meetings of external members of Governing Body take place annually.

**Decision:** Subject to the change detailed above, the response to HEA correspondence on the Annual Governance Statement was approved on the proposal of SH, this was seconded by DF.

**Action:** Seek clarification from HEA and the sector about who should attend the “private” sessions of Governing Body.

### **GB 28.05.1.6 Code of Governance Section 3.4 System for Recording Concerns of GB Members**

Advise from OFX, recommendations from ARC and suggested text were circulated to members prior to the meeting. In response to a question, it was clarified that the requirement for this system comes from the State Code of Practice, it has been the experience of members that such a system is rarely used. The proposed requirement that the Chair should “approve” a request to seek legal advice was discussed, it was suggested that, in order for the concern of a member to be noted, it should represent a risk to the University.

**Action:** ARC to review revised wording & GB members comments.

### **GB 28.05.1.7 Bad Debt Update**

JF summarised the presentation circulated to members prior to the meeting; all debt detailed is included in the overall bad debt provision.

1. Student fees - Finance will take responsibility for collecting student fees, a project is starting in January to implement an ATU procedure based on the fee collection process in the former GMIT. This includes implementing cut-off dates, holding clinics and issuing regular communications to students about fee payment and fee payment options, encouraging students to engage with the University about fee payment, grant applications, etc. and taking appropriate action for non-payment of student fees. The procedure is being developed with input from Finance, Academic Affairs and the Online Profession and Flexible Development Department, who have responsibility for on-line learning.
2. Debt related to the former IT Sligo IP and patent royalties with an associated spin-out.
3. Other - IT Sligo historical debt.

Members discussed fee payment options and the difficulties that students can have when applying for grant aid (SUSI) for the first time. Once in the system, renewal of grant aid is relatively straightforward, but this can take some time to mobilise in the first instance. ARC sees the development of an ATU process for fee collection and finance taking responsibility for this as a positive development.

### **GB 28.05.2 Report from Strategic Development Subcommittee**

OM presented the report from the Strategic Development Subcommittee.

#### **GB 28.05.2.1 Strategic Plan Reporting Template**

This is a work in progress and was circulated to Governing Body members for information.

### GB 28.05.2.2 Capital Projects Update

A list of capital projects was circulated to members. A presentation with more information about ongoing project and a list of ATU properties will be uploaded to the Governing Body SharePoint site. HMcG provided the following updates:

- Sports facility in Letterkenny – €8.7m funding was announced on the morning of the meeting. This facility is a partnership with various sporting and public sector organisations. Development will be completed in phases; total cost estimate is [REDACTED], [REDACTED] [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]
- Land acquisition in Sligo – is being considered by Sligo County Council, with the University's request that there be no conditions on the title. If approved, contracts will be drawn-up and brought to Governing Body for approval.

*Post meeting update – at their meeting on Monday 4<sup>th</sup> November, Sligo County Council voted in favour of the sale of lands to ATU.*

Members discussed options for funding the student building in Galway. There was discussion about the availability of HEA funding to support the expansion of research facilities at the Sligo campus. A Strategic Assessment Report (SAR) was submitted to HEA in April 2022 for €70-80m funding to support the integration of St Angela's and expansion of research facilities, this was approved to move to the next phase (Preliminary Business Case – PBC) in April 2023. The President advised the meeting that the HEA has indicated that the level of funding is likely to be in the order of €35m and is not intended for research facilities. The University is currently evaluating various options.

**Action:** Circulate SAR signed in June 2023 to members for information.

**Action:** Possible agenda item for future Strategic Development Subcommittee meeting – funding of expansion of research facilities for the University.

### GB 28.05.2.3 Amendment to Terms of Reference

OM advised the meeting that the membership section of the Terms of Reference for the Strategic Development Subcommittee has been updated to allow for two staff members of the Governing Body to be members of the subcommittee.

**Decision:** The update to the Terms of Reference for the Strategic Development Subcommittee was approved on the proposal of OM, this was seconded by DF.

**Decision:** Brian de Souza was proposed as a member of the Strategic Development Subcommittee by MMcN, this was seconded by RD

### GB 28.07 President's Report

OF provided a summary of the report, highlighting a number of items including:

- the announcement in October by Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, Patrick O'Donovan, of the launch of the new Master of Pharmacy programme at ATU
- the accreditation process for the Architecture programme and successful outcome

- the impact of the delay in approval of the Senior Leadership team structure
- A selection of ATU marketing materials was made available to members.

**Action:** Letter from the Chair and OF to Minister O'Donovan re approval for senior leadership team and concern regarding the fact that TUs cannot appoint professors.

## **GB 28.08 Report from Academic Council & Registrar**

### **GB 28.08.1 Student Profile Key Facts and Figures 2023/24**

BB presented a report which summarised ATU student data for the 2023-2024 academic year. The meeting complimented the clarity, presentation and relevant information included in the report.

### **GB 28.08.2 Conferring Dates and Times 2024**

A list of conferring dates was provided to members and members were again invited to attend any conferring ceremony of their choice.

### **GB 28.08.3 ATU commitment to the Academic Ladder System**

A copy of the Access, Transfer and Progression Policy was provided for information. A discussion took place on how ATU's commitment to the ladder system is communicated. BB advised the meeting that the ATU pages of the CAO Handbook ([CAO Handbook2025 web full.pdf](#)) show programmes where exit awards are available and have information about progression options for Level 6 & 7 programmes. This information is not provided in the CAO handbook by any other organisation.

### **GB 28.08.4 Term of Office of Academic Council**

At their September meeting, Governing Body expressed the opinion that the best option would be the extension of the term of office of the current Academic Council for no more than 9-12 months, subject to consultation with Academic Council and the relevant unions. This has been considered by Academic Council who recommend a 12-month extension to their term of office to December 2025, with some minor changes to regulations to provide for representation from St Angela's staff. Governing Body will be asked to decide on this at the December meeting.

### **GB 28.08.5 Update on Policy & Procedure Development**

A document providing an update on policy and procedure development was circulated to the meeting which listed policies and procedures approved and a timeline for those yet to be approved.

### **GB 28.08.6 Approval of Academic Policies & Procedures**

The role of Academic Council and its committees / subcommittees in the approval of academic policies and procedures was discussed.

**Action:** Review at next Academic Council meeting – although it was indicated that a review of the approvals process had been discussed at the most recent meeting of Academic Council.

**GB 28.09 Approval of Governing Body minutes**

Approval of minutes of the 7<sup>th</sup> October Governing Body meeting was deferred to the next meeting

**GB 28.10 AOB**

**GB 28.10.3 Next Meeting – 9<sup>th</sup> December 2024**

JF advised that the HEA has requested a 30-minute meeting with the Governing Body at their 9<sup>th</sup> December meeting. To facilitate this, it is proposed that the meeting will start at the earlier time of 9am.

**GB 28.03 Matters Arising and Correspondence**

Review of matters arising and correspondence and the Governing Body log of action was deferred to the next meeting.

The next Governing Body meeting will be on 9<sup>th</sup> December at the Galway City campus followed by lunch in the Connemara Restaurant.



Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Chairperson

Date: 19/12/2024