



Ollscoil
Teicneolaíochta
an Atlantaigh

Atlantic
Technological
University

Minutes of the 29th ATU Governing Body Meeting

Held on Monday 9th December 2024 at 9am

Galway City Campus and TEAMS

Present:

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

In attendance:

| | |
|--|------|
| Jim Fennell (Secretary) – in person | JF |
| Carol Geraghty (Recording Secretary) – in person | CG |
| Dr Billy Bennett – online – item 2.2 | BB |
| Eoin Bradley – online – items 2.3 & 2.4 | EB |
| Ben Austen – online – item 2.4 | BA |
| Michael Henehan – in person – item 3.1 | MH |
| Elizabeth McCabe – in person – item 3.1 & 3.2 | EMcC |
| Edel O'Connor – in person – item 3.1.1 | EO'C |
| Dr Alan Wall, HEA CEO – in person – Item 9 | AW |
| Orla Nugent, HEA Deputy CEO – in person – Item 9 | ON |
| Pearl Cunningham, HEA Head of Finance – in person – Item 9 | PC |

Apologies: David Minton, Joanne Grehan, Dr John Bartlett

GB 29.04 President's Report

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

- CINNTE – overview of the on-site assessment week, top-level feedback received and timeline for detailed feedback and the completion of the review process.
- Review of Student Services – this gives an overview of services provided to and availed of by students during the 2023/2024 academic year across the 9 campuses

[REDACTED]

GB 29.02.2 Draft Regulations for the Extension of the Term of Office of Academic Council

BB highlighted the key amendments:

- The extension of the term of office of the current Academic Council to 31st December 2025
- Changing the status of the Head of ATU St Angelas to being a full member of Academic Council with voting rights
- The addition of four staff from St Angelas ATU to the membership of Academic Council
- Regulations for the election of four staff members from St Angelas to Academic Council

OF reminded the meeting that when Academic Council was originally established in 2022, St Angelas was not part of ATU, hence the need to amend the membership of Academic Council to allow full participation from St Angelas.

Decision: On the proposal of OM draft regulations for the extension of the term of office of Academic Council and regulations for the election of St Angelas staff to Academic Council were approved, this was seconded by MMcN

GB 29.02.3 Purchase of land from Sligo County Council

EB presented the paper on this matter, confirmed that there are no restrictive covenants on the contract; provided information about valuations on the land, including a third valuation which was recently obtained at the request of the HEA; and clarified that approx. €100k of the funds allocated to this purchase are for legal and other costs associated with the purchase. A member advised that there is huge support for this purchase in Sligo. OF reiterated that the only plan for the land at this time is for student accommodation, and progress on this is depending on a decision from Government in relation to a borrowing framework or a financial model. The University is represented on the sectoral student accommodation working group which has been established.

Decision: On the proposal of OM and seconded by DF Governing Body approved the purchase of lands from Sligo County Council and the contracts for the purchase, with OF and MMcN to witness the application of the University Seal.

Action: Update the paper presented to Governing Body to include information contained in the most recent valuation.

GB 29.02.4 License agreements for Public Private Partnership Projects (PPP) in Letterkenny and Galway

EB presented copies of contracts issuing licences to the Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science to enter into an agreement with the developer who will build and manage under-licence these buildings for the next 25 years. Minor amendments were requested, i.e. update licences to reflect correct dates and remove any handwritten amendments.

Decision: On the proposal of JC and seconded by BDS, subject to the above amendments, the licence agreements for Public Private Partnership projects at the Galway City and Donegal Letterkenny campuses was approved, with OF and MMcN to witness to the application of the University Seal.

GB 29.06 Approval of Governing Body minutes

The minutes of previous meetings were considered at this stage of the meeting.

GB 29.06.1 Minutes of 7th October 2024

Remove reference to research / background checks from section 27.4.4

Decision: Subject to the above amendment, the minutes of the meeting of Governing Body held on 7th October 2024 were approved on the proposal of OM, and seconded by DF

GB 29.06.2 Minutes of 4th November 2024

At the meeting of Governing Body on 4th November the Strategic Development Subcommittee Terms of Reference were amended to provide for the addition of a 2nd staff member.

Decision: Subject to the above amendment, the minutes of the 4th November 2024 Governing Body meeting was approved on the proposal of MMcN, and seconded by JD

Members are asked to notify the Secretary and Chair in advance about any queries or requested amendments to the minutes of Governing Body meetings.

GB 29.07 Matters Arising

OF advised that the Governing Body communication regarding the role of AC and its committees / subcommittees in the approval of academic policies and procedures was given at the recent Academic Council meeting on the 6th December, a review of this role was already an agenda item for the meeting. A revised document setting out the approval mechanism for academic procedures was approved by Academic Council.

GB 29.03 Committee & Subcommittee Reports

GB 29.03.1 Report from Audit & Risk Committee (ARC)

JC reported on the November ARC meeting. ARC met with representatives from the Comptrollers & Auditor General office (C&AG). C&AG reported their concerns about the delay in getting responses to questions during the recent audit of the University's accounts for the period ended 31st August 2023. These delays arose due to the complexities of the process for preparing the Financial Statements arising from (i) a non-standard accounting period and (ii) having to combine financial information from 3 different accounting systems for 12 months plus a unified accounting system for 7 months of the reporting period. The University is committed to maintaining a good working relationship with C&AG and to this end it was agreed that ARC will meet with the C&AG in early 2025 to consider the plan for the audit of the Financial Statements for the year ended 31st August 2024, with clear and regular lines of communication in place.

GB 29.03.1.1 Financial Statements for 17 months ended 31st August 2023

EO'C presented a summary of the changes to the financial statements since March 2024 none of which were material.

Decision: The Financial Statements for 17 months ended 31st August 2023 were approved on the proposal of MMcN and seconded by MG

GB 29.03.1.2 ARC Annual Report to GB

The ARC Annual Report was circulated to members prior to the meeting. JC & MH summarised the report. BdS requested that the unprecedented changes associated with the availability of generative artificial intelligence (AI) be considered in risk and compliance documents going forward. Members were advised that a detailed review of the University's Risk Register facilitated by Deloitte is scheduled for early 2025, and, as requested at the November meeting, Governing Body members' suggestions about risks related to AI have been communicated and will be considered. JC provided further insights about the review of risk by ARC.

GB 29.03.1.3 Review of Effectiveness of ARC

Decision: The effectiveness of ARC was approved on the proposal of MMcN, this was seconded by OM

GB 29.03.1.4 Annual review of Systems of Internal Control & Risk Management

MH presented a summary of the University's systems of internal control and risk management system, including Governing Body responsibilities with respect to these systems. Members discussed risks related to AI and its potential impact on all aspects of the University. In response to a query, JC provided information about how risks are reviewed by ARC and reported to GB.

[REDACTED]

Decision: On the proposal of OF the annual review of systems of internal control and risk management was approved, and seconded by SH

Action: Concerns about the impact of AI to be relayed to Academic Council and the UPT

GB 29.03.1.5 Charities Code Compliance Record Form

MH provided an overview of the return to be made to the Charities Regulator. The form presented isn't submitted to the Charity Regulator; it must be completed annually & approved by Governing Body and must be available should the Charities Regulator audit the University's records.

Decision: The charities code compliance record form was approved on the proposal of MMcN, this was seconded by JD

GB 29.03.1.6 Policy Review – Conflict of Interest, Anti-Fraud & Anti-Corruption

The University's Conflict of Interest and Anti-Corruption policies have been reviewed by Management and ARC, no changes are recommended. One change to the Anti-Fraud Policy has been identified – section 7.2 to be updated to reflect that the group conducting the preliminary investigation shall present a written report to the President or the President's nominee. In response to a question, it was clarified that the intention of section 2.2 which states "*Members of staff should ensure that they are familiar with other relevant Atlantic TU policies, procedures and regulations*" and lists several University Policies, is to ensure that anyone using the Anti-Fraud policy has considered all mechanisms for reporting and dealing with the potential issue.

Decision: Subject to the amendment to the Anti-Fraud Policy detailed above, the revised Conflict of Interest, Anti-Fraud & Anti-Corruption policies were approved on the proposal of MMcN, this was seconded by MG.

GB 29.03.1.7 Corporate Procurement Plan

The Corporate Procurement Plan and supporting information was circulated to members prior to the meeting.

Decision: On the proposal of DF the Corporate Procurement Plan was approved, this was seconded by SH

Returning to the ARC Report, JC referenced an action from the November GB meeting for ARC to reconsider the wording for the system for recording the concerns of GB members. Alternative wording for this process (changes from text reviewed in November highlighted in yellow)- "*When a Governing Body member, in the furtherance of their duties as a Governing Body member, requires independent professional advice to discharge their responsibilities as a Governing Body member that such advice be sought, with the approval of the Chair of the Governing Body or the Governing Body, by the Secretary to Governing Body from the legal advisors to the University. Such advice when received will be made available to the Governing Body. This advice will be sought at the reasonable expense of the University*". Members discussed what would happen in the event that there is a conflict of interest in terms of receiving advice from the University's legal advisors. The wording was

agreed subject to making a further amendment to make provision that, where appropriate, advice may be sought from an alternative legal advisor.

GB 29.03.2.3 Capital Development Reserves

The meeting was provided with information on two projects which have received some external funding and now require matched funding be allocated from the Capital Development Reserves. This means that funding for these projects is set-aside, allowing the projects to progress through the procurements process. They will come back before Governing Body for approval before they progress to completion. These projects are:

- Phase 2 of the development of the Lough Lannagh Leisure Complex (Mayo) in conjunction with Mayo County Council; €300,000 was previously allocated and an additional allocation of €45,000 was sought to address a shortfall in funding of €90,000, the other 50% of the shortfall is being funded by Mayo County Council.
- Expansion of the gym at An Danlann (student sports centre) at the Donegal-Letterkenny campus. This facility is used by students, staff and sports related academic programmes. The total projected project cost is €1,445,303 with €1,019,222 being financed from Capital Development Reserves and the balance of €426,081 from the Sports Capital Grant.

Decision: The following was approved on the proposal of MG, and seconded by JC

- Increase allocation from the capital development reserve for Phase 2 of the development of the Lough Lannagh Leisure Complex (Mayo) by €45,000 to €345,000
- Capital Development Reserves of €1,019,222 to be allocated for the expansion of the gym at An Danlann (student sports centre) at the Donegal Letterkenny campus

GB 29.03.2.4 Policy on Remuneration & Claim Submission

A member requested that section 4 Responsibilities be amended to clarify responsibilities with respect to the sign-off and submission by Manager / Supervisor of claim forms.

Decision: Subject to the requested amendment, the Policy on Remuneration & Claim Submission was approved on the proposal of OM and seconded by JC

GB 29.03.2.5 Policy on Additional Payments to Academic Staff

Decision: The Policy on Additional Payments to Academic Staff was approved on the proposal of DF and seconded by OM

GB 29.03.3.1 Preventing & Responding to Gender-Based Violence Policy

Decision: Version 2.0 of the Preventing & Responding to Gender-Based Violence Policy was approved on the proposal of OF, and seconded by RD

GB 29.03.3.4 Gender Identity and Expression Policy

Decision: Version 1.1 of the Gender Identity and Expression Policy was approved on the proposal of MMcN, and seconded by BdS

GB 29.03.3.5 External Member of Governing Body (Vacant Post EDI Subcommittee)

There is a vacancy for a second external member of Governing Body to join the EDI Subcommittee.

A member of the committee expressed concern as to the resources allocated to the EDI team to enable specific pieces of work to be completed.

Action: Write to external members advising of this vacancy and seeking nominations.

Action: Review resourcing requirements to meet Athena Swan deadlines and other EDI initiatives

GB 29.09 Meeting with HEA Representatives

At the request of the HEA, Dr Alan Wall, HEA CEO, Orla Nugent, HEA Deputy CEO and Pearl Cunningham, HEA Head of Finance joined the meeting for the last 30 minutes. Dr Wall commended ATU on progress to date as a TU, on its strong vision and the success in the Expression of Interest (EOI) for Pharmacy and Veterinary programmes. Dr Wall explained that the EOI is a new process which has been introduced by HEA to identify opportunities in the higher education system to build capacity. OF replied that the University sees the EOI process as a huge opportunity for the Northern and Western region and provided an update on the status of the Pharmacy and Veterinary programmes.

Members provided a summary of the items reviewed at the December Governing Body meeting including approval of the Financial Statement for the period ended 31st August 2023, the relationship that the University has established with the C&AG during the preparation of the financial statements and the approval to purchase lands in Sligo which are intended to be used for student accommodation. Some concerns for the university were discussed including the delay in receiving approval for the senior leadership team, challenges associated with change management, the inability to borrow money to fund student accommodation and challenges with academic progression options e.g. lack of professors. SM and KW advised that access to student accommodation and student hardship are the main concerns of the Student Union. The HEA representatives agreed that these challenges exist across the sector.

The oversight agreement was discussed. Dr Wall emphasised the importance of flexibility and open dialogue between TUs and the HEA.

GB 29.09.2 ATU & HEA Oversight Agreement 2025

The draft Oversight Agreement was received from HEA and circulated to members prior to the meeting.

The Chair thanked Governing Body members and university staff for their contribution to the University & the work of Governing Body and extended best wishes for Christmas.

The next Governing Body meeting will be on 17th February 2025 at the Donegal-Letterkenny campus.



Maureen McFadden S.C.

Signed: _____

Date: 14/03/2025

Chairperson