Ollscoil Teicneolaíochta an Atlantaigh

Atlantic Technological University

Minutes of the 33rd ATU Governing Body Meeting
Held on Monday 23rd June 2025 at 9.30am
Donegal-Killybegs Campus and TEAMS

Present:

Maura McNally – in person	MMcN
Dr Orla Flynn – in person	OF
Joanne Grehan – online	JG
Dr Brian De Souza – in person	BDS
Dr Martin Robinson – in person	MR
Joe Cunningham – in person	JC
John Daffy – online	JD
Conor Murphy – in person	CM
Kevin Sweeney – online	KS
Rachel Ashworth – online	RA
Regina Daly – in person	RD
Michael Gilvarry – online	MG
Dr John Bartlett – in person	JB
Kathya Rouse – in person	KR
Naomi Walsh – online	NW

In attendance:

Jim Fennell (Secretary) – in person	JF
Carol Geraghty (Recording Secretary) – in person	CG
Michael Henehan – in person – items 3.3, 5.1, 6.4, 6.5, 7.1	MH
Sinead Donnellan – online - item 6.6	SD
Henry McGarvey – online - item 6.11	HMcG
Rod Toner – online – item 6.7	RT
Elizabeth McCabe – online – items 6.7, 7.1.4 & 7.1.7	EMcC
Dr Tom Ward (IPA) – online - item 5.1	TW
Alice Kelly (IPA) – online – item 5.1	AK
Eve Ryan (IPA) – online – item 5.1	ER

Apologies: Dara Foynes, Julia Bocianowska, Sarah Mohan, Seamus Hughes

Conor Murphy was welcomed to his first meeting.

MMcN extended the sympathies of the members to Seamus Hughes on the passing of [redacted]

GB 33.01 Declaration of Conflicts of Interests

JB declared a potential conflict with item 6.1. No other conflicts of interest were declared at the start of the meeting.

GB 33.02.1 Minutes of 12th May 2025

The following additions were requested in advance of the meeting –

GB 32.04.1 action 156 add text “and that it is not a requirement”.

AOB add “Request for agenda item for the next meeting dealing with the responsibility of the GB under the HEA Act for the creation and maintenance of the academic QA system”.

Decision: The minutes of the 12th March Governing Body meeting, with the above detailed additions, were approved on the proposal of JB and seconded by RD

GB 33.03 Matters Arising and Correspondence

GB 33.03.1 Governing Body Log of Actions Items

The Governing Body Log of Actions was circulated to members in advance of the meeting.

Decision: The meeting agreed to close all items presented as *Propose Closed* on the proposal of MMcN and seconded by BdS

GB 33.03.1.1 Action 162 - Legal Advice on Permanent Standing Subcommittee

The legal advice on the establishment of a Permanent Standing Committee to make decisions in respect of unspecified urgent matters stated that it would be advisable to confine the remit of such a committee to decision-making on very specific matters during July and August. It further clarified that the acts of such a committee are not subject to confirmation by the Governing Body.

GB 33.03.2 Report from Subcommittee with Delegated Authority

A summary of the meeting, copy of the meeting papers and draft minutes were circulated.

The Subcommittee with Delegated Authority approved the following for the Apprenticeship Expansion Letterkenny (Metal Fabrication programme and Refrigeration & Air Conditioning programme):

- Gate 3 approval under the Infrastructure Guidelines
- Approval to award contract under Project Review 7 of the Capital Works Management Framework. Construction Contract Value €2,998,000.00 (exc. VAT); €3,402,730.00 (inc. VAT)

GB 33.03.3 Correspondence with the Charities Regulator

Correspondence between University & Charity Regulator was provided for information.

Action:	Correspondence between the University and Charity Regulator to be copied to Charity Trustees
Action:	Research & Innovation function to provide a list of partnerships, contacts, etc. with "other countries" for the annual Charities Return

GB 33.04 President's Report

OF presented the report circulated with meeting papers and gave the following updates:

- Senior Leadership Team – first three senior leadership roles will be discussed further under item 6.1; interviews for first two Dean roles scheduled for early July; approval requested from DFHERIS to fill the remaining Dean roles in advance of a "demonstration of savings" submission to be made before approval will be given to advertise the final three roles.
- Organisation Structures Faculties & Schools – the proposal and timelines for faculty and school structural changes was presented; many of these changes will be implemented from September 2025 with work ongoing on aligning departments and some programmes during the 25/26 academic year.
- Online & Distance Learning – HEA data was presented showing that the University is the Irish higher education institution (HEI) with the highest number and highest proportion of online & distance learning. The high proportion of overall student numbers represents a potential risk to the University, there is also the opportunity for growth in this area.
- Regional Economic Overview – slides from John Daly, Economist of the Northern and Western Regional Assembly were shared, these show the broad scale of challenges faced by the region.

GB33.05.1 **External Evaluation of Governing Body and its Subcommittees – IPA Report**

Representatives from IPA joined the meeting and presented their draft report. Members welcomed the findings of the evaluation.

Action: Update IPA report to add reference to new responsibilities of Governing Body under section 89 of the HEA Act 2022

Action: Schedule additional Governing Body Meeting – agenda to include further discussion on this report with IPA support / attendance

GB 33.06 Items for Approval

GB33.06.1 Staff Appointments

The following staff appointments were presented to Governing Body for approval:

Post	Location	Contract Type & Term	Grade	Basis for Appointment	Recommended Candidate
Head of Department – Building & Civil Engineering	Galway City Campus	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	Dr Shane Newell
Governance & Compliance Manager	Any ATU Campus	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	Mr Shane O'Connor
Head of Department – Heritage, Tourism, Languages and Humanities	Galway City Campus	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	Ms Gayle Tarmey
Head of Campus – St Angelas Campus	St Angelas Campus	[redacted]	[redacted]	[redacted]	Dr Fiona Crowe

Decision: These posts were approved on the proposal of CM and seconded by BdS

Senior Leadership Appointments

OF provided information about the number of applicants, number of candidates who attended for interview, qualifications and recent experience of the recommended candidates.

Recommended candidates:

Registrar & Chief Academic Officer – Dr Billy Bennett.

Decision: This post was approved on the proposal of JC and seconded by MMcN

Chief Officer, Research, Innovation and Engagement – Dr Brendan Jennings.

Decision: This post was approved on the proposal of BdS and seconded by CM

Chief Finance Officer – no recommended candidate. This post will be readvertised, an interim solution may be brought to GB for consideration later in the year.

GB33.06.2 Request for Delegated Authority

Members considered the following Delegation Resolution:

The Governing Body, in exercise of the functions conferred on it by paragraph 6 of Schedule 1 of the Technological Universities Act 2018, hereby resolves to delegate to a subcommittee which shall comprise:

- the Governing Body Chair
- the University President

and one of either

- the Chair of the Audit & Risk Committee

or

- the Chair of the Finance Subcommittee

the authority to:

1. Award contracts with a value more than €1m provided same are within the approved budget.
2. Make appointments to senior management grades and provided same are within the approved budget.
3. Make senior leadership appointments provided the posts have been approved by DFHERIS and are within the approved budget.

The purpose of this delegation resolution is to facilitate the smooth running of the University during the months of July and August until the Governing Body meets on 1st September 2025, at which time this delegation resolution shall expire. Any contracts approved and appointments made under this delegation resolution shall be notified to the Governing Body at its meeting on Monday 1st September 2025 but shall not be subject to confirmation by Governing Body.

A list of potential delegations was provided to the meeting.

Decision: The delegation resolution was approved on the proposal of KR and seconded by CM

Action: Papers and invites for meeting of the Subcommittee with Delegated Authority to be circulated to all Governing Body members

GB33.06.3 Appointment of Student Union Nominees to Governing Body

The University Students Unions (SU) was invited to nominate three registered students of the University for appointment to the Governing Body. Nominees are:

- ATU Galway-Mayo — Thomas Gallagher (SU President Galway-Mayo)
- ATU Sligo — Emil Kindl (SU President Sligo)
- ATU Donegal — Joseph Sweeney (SU President Donegal)

Members thanked the outgoing student representatives for their service to the ATU Governing Body.

Decision: The appointment of student union nominees Thomas Gallagher, Emil Kindl and Joseph Sweeney was approved on the proposal of MMcN and seconded by CM

Action: Send letters of appointment to student union nominees

GB33.06.4 Appointment of Charity Trustees

JF advised that ATU is a registered charity and has four trustees. There are two vacancies arising from the resignation of trustees from Governing Body. Charity trustees must be external Governing Body members; Governing Body members who are students or staff of the University are not eligible to be charity Trustees. The work of the Charity is dealt with at the Governing Body meetings and there is no plan to change that. An overview of the role of a charity trustee was circulated with meeting papers.

Decision: KR and CM were appointed as charity trustees on the proposal of RD and seconded by BdS

GB33.06.5 Draft Charities Annual Return 2023/2024

MH advised that the annual report to the Charities Regulator is due to be filed by 30th June. The draft ATU Annual Financial Statement for the period from 01/09/2023 – 31/08/2024 is currently being audited by the office of the Controller & Auditor General (C&AG). The Charities Regulator has agreed that ATU can submit an initial annual report based on the draft Annual Financial Statements and, when the C&AG audit is complete and the ATU Annual Financial Statements for the period from 01/09/2023 – 31/08/2024 are approved, ATU will file the final annual report.

Decision: The draft annual return to the Charities Regulator for the period 01/09/2023 – 31/08/2024 was approved on the proposal of MMcN and seconded by CM

GB33.06.6 Dignity at Work Policy

SD updated members on further consultation with staff unions since the Policy was discussed at the May meeting. Members welcomed this policy and requested changes:

Section 6.6 – remove last paragraph (duplication)

Section 7.3 paragraph 3 – replace "verbal" with "written"

Decision: Subject to inclusion of the above changes, the Dignity at Work policy was approved on the proposal of JB and seconded by BdS

GB33.06.7 Recruitment & Selection Procedure

RT summarised proposed changes to the procedure. OF advised that changes recommended by Governing Body in 2024 and an output from the Athena Swan staff survey have been considered when making the proposed changes. Further changes requested:

- Include a reference to the appeals procedure in the Recruitment & Selection Procedure
- Part B: Shortlisting (page 10) update point 1 to include wording to indicate that this relates to all recruitment campaigns except grade 3-4
- Change the review period for the procedure to 1 year

Decision: Subject to the requested changes, the update to the Recruitment & Selection Procedure was approved on the proposal of JB, this was seconded by CM

Action: Review the Recruitment & Selection Procedure in 1 year and report on any issues and / or appeals related to shortlisting

GB33.06.8 Quality of Service Charter

The draft document was circulated with meeting papers.

Decision: The Quality of Service Charter was approved on the proposal of MMcN and seconded by KR

In response to a question about how staff are made aware of policies and the staff training provided the meeting was advised that policies are published on a SharePoint page which is accessible to all staff. Staff are advised at induction of the SharePoint site and by email of all new policies published on the SharePoint site. Training may also be provided where relevant. Developing a system for staff training on policies is one of the items being considered for inclusion in an application for the Technological Enhancement Fund (TEF).

Action: Communication to be sent to staff advising where policies and procedures can be found, how they are notified about new documents or changes to existing documents and who to contact if they have questions.

GB33.06.9 Connacht Rugby Sponsorship

OF provided information about the history of the sponsorship, its links to the Sports and Exercise Science programmes at the Galway City Dublin Rd campus and potential future development opportunities between Connacht Rugby and the University's Sports and Exercise Science programmes. She also advised of some concerns that had been expressed by UPT members. Members discussed the overall sponsorship profile of the University and indicated that further review and discussion would be welcomed.

Decision: The sponsorship of Connacht Rugby for one year at a cost of €82,800 was approved on the proposal of BdS, this was seconded by RD

Action: Review of the University's overall sponsorship profile to be an agenda item for the additional Governing Body Meeting

GB33.06.10 Governing Body Workplan September 2025 – August 2026

The Governing Body workplan, which is a schedule of agenda items for the 2025-2026 academic year was circulated to members in advance of the meeting. Members agreed that this needs to be reviewed to align with recommendations in the IPA Governing Body Performance Review.

Decision: The workplan for September was approved on the proposal of KR, this was seconded by BdS

Action: Review of the Governing Body Workplan for the 2025/2026 academic year to be an agenda item for the additional Governing Body Meeting

GB33.06.11 CPO for Bus Stop at Crowley Park

HMcG presented a change to plans proposed by Galway City Council for their CPO Submission for BusConnects works near the Galway City Dublin Rd campus. The change involves the relocation of a bus stop adjacent to Crowley Park and taking 63sq2m of University land.

Decision: The proposed amendment to the Galway City Council CPO Submission for BusConnect works near the Galway City Dublin Rd campus involving the relocation of a bus stop to Crowley Park, taking 63sq2m of University land was approved on the proposal of MMcN and seconded by KR

GB 33.07 Committee & Subcommittee Reports

GB33.07.1 Report from ARC meeting of 13th May

JC noted that that this would Michael Henehan's last meeting as he is retiring and thanked Michael for his valuable contribution to the running of the ARC and to Governing Body and wished him well for the future.

JC presented the report from the ARC meeting of 13th May. At their meeting on 13th May ARC reviewed the following, which are recommended to Governing Body for approval.

GB33.07.1.1 Risk Register

MH provided a presentation on the risk register to April 2025, gave details of new risks added, risk movement, the 5 highest rated risks and advised that mitigating actions are in place for all risks. Members discussed how the risk related to a "transformative student experience" is documented and actions taken and plans to address this risk including building plans and student support funding. In response to a question about the cyber risk, MH advised that the University has business continuity plans for each function which are being tested this year and is looking at the option of cyber insurance. The risk related to the budget and financial impact of recruitment was discussed.

Decision: On the proposal of MR the risk register was approved, this was seconded by CM

Action: Risk Register risks F2 & F3 - the Recruitment Report and ECF Report to be periodically reviewed by FSC & ARC to confirm that budget and forecasts make adequate provision for recruitment

GB33.07.1.2 Sponsorship Policy

The Sponsorship Policy is being updated to include a definition of sponsorship.

Decision: The proposed changes to the Sponsorship Policy were approved on the proposal of JB, this was seconded by CM

GB33.07.1.3 Risk Management Policy

Proposed changes: (1) replace reference to the TU Application with the Strategic Plan; (2) change the review term for the policy.

Decision: On the proposal of MR, the changes to the Risk Management Policy were approved, this was seconded by KR

GB33.07.1.4 **Travel & Subsistence Policy**

EMcC provided a summary of the proposed changes.

Decision: The proposed changes to the Travel & Subsistence Policy were approved on the proposal of CM and seconded by KR

GB33.07.1.5 **Code of Conduct for Employees**

JF advised that this is a new document and provided information on the consultation process for the development of the document.

Decision: The Code of Conduct for Employees was approved on the proposal of JB and seconded by KR

GB33.07.1.6 **Gap Analysis of ATU Interim Code of Governance & the Code of Practice for Governance of State Bodies 2016**

Deloitte conducted a 'Gap Analysis' between the ATU Interim Code of Governance and the Code of Practice for Governance of State Bodies. The governance team is working with colleagues in TUS & will bring forward proposed amendments to the ATU Interim Code of Governance based on this gap analysis. In addition to gaps noted in the Deloitte report, feedback received from Governing Body members prior to the meeting and amendments for the HEA Act 2022 will be taken into consideration.

Decision: On the proposal of MMcN the Gap Analysis of ATU Interim Code of Governance & the Code of Practice for Governance of State Bodies 2016 was adopted and the plan to update the code was approved, this was seconded by KR

GB33.07.1.7 **Bad Debt Write-Off**

EMcC presented a proposal for bad debt write-off comprising Student Fees - €1,528,000 and Trade - €547,578. In response to a question about how student fee debt is being addressed, the meeting was advised that, in the legacy institutes, the Registrar's function was responsible for fee collection in Sligo and Letterkenny and the Finance function had this responsibility in Galway. A project is scheduled to start later this year to move the responsibility for student fee collection to a dedicated team in Finance & align the fee collection process for the University. ARC and FSC have requested regular progress reports on the project. The meeting discussed the options available when students do not pay fees and supports available to students who experience hardship.

Decision: The write-off of €1,528,000 Student Fees & Trade debt of €547,578 was approved on the proposal of CM and approved by JB

Action: Provide a briefing on follow-up with students regarding unpaid fees during the academic year

Action: Give a briefing on hardship funds available to all students including EU and International students

GB33.07.1.8 Procurement Report for 2024 per Circular 09/2024

This is a new reporting requirement. As per Circular 09_2024, the University must submit a report on the use of centralised procurement arrangements (CPA) annually to the Office of Government Procurement (OGP). The report must include contracts awarded in the previous 12 months for goods, supplies and services valued in excess of €143k (excl. VAT). The report must be submitted by 1st July each year in respect of the previous calendar year. The report presented was prepared by the University's Procurement team and has been reviewed by the University's Chief Risk Officer. MH summarised the contracts which did not use the CPA offered by the OGP.

Decision: On the proposal of CM the Procurement Report for 2024 per Circular 09/2024 was approved, this was seconded by KR

GB33.07.1.9 Procurement Non-Compliance Report September 2024 – April 2025

A summary of non-compliant spend was circulated for information.

[redacted]

GB33.07.2 Report from Strategic Development Subcommittee Meeting of 4th June

The report from Strategic Development Subcommittee Meeting of 4th June was circulated with meeting papers.

GB33.07.2.1 Appointment of Chair and external GB members to the Strategic Development Subcommittee (SDS)

KR was nominated as chair of the SDS.

Decision: The appointment of KR as chair of the Strategic Development Subcommittee was approved on the proposal of MMcN, this was seconded by BdS

GB33.07.3 Report from EDI Subcommittee

Items for approval deferred to the September meeting.

GB33.07.4 Report from Finance Subcommittee Meeting of 19th June

GB33.07.4.1 Finance Outturn Jan-April 2025

GB33.07.4.2 HEA Regular Report September 2024 - April 2025

GB33.07.4.4.1 Report on Capital Development Reserves

GB33.07.4.6 Staffing Headcount (ECF) Report

GB33.07.4.7 Annual Report from FSC to Governing Body

Papers for the above agenda items were circulated for information in advance of the meeting.

At their meeting on 19th June, FSC reviewed the following, which are recommended to Governing Body for approval.

GB33.07.4.3 Bank Mandate

The following proposed update to the bank mandate was presented:

- Helen McMorrow to be removed (retired)
- Mairead Geoghegan to be removed (no longer working at ATU)
- Catherina Ronayne to be added (Appointed Grade 7)
- Karen Deignan to be added (Appointed Accountant)
- Deirdre Cannon to be added (Appointed Accountant).

Decision: The update to the bank mandate was approved on the proposal of JB and seconded by MMcN

GB33.07.4.4.2 Transfer to Capital Development Reserves

Details of the proposed capital development reserve transfers were provided with the meeting papers.

Decision: The following Capital Development reserve transfers were approved on the proposal of JB, this was seconded by MMcN

- €8.62m - Veterinary School at Knocknamona, Letterkenny
- €8.4m - Ash Lane & St Angelas Campus project under the Technological sector strategic projects fund (TSSPF)

GB33.07.4.5 Gifts & Hospitality Policy

This is a new policy. One change was requested by FSC when they reviewed this policy at their meeting on 19th June – section 6.1 (page 10) remove sentence "*In such circumstances, and where feasible, employees should seek to pay for the hospitality being offered*".

Decision: Subject to the above detailed change, V1 of the Gifts & Hospitality Policy was approved on the proposal of CM and seconded by JC

GB33.09.1 Sponsorship Schedule

GB33.09.2 Recruitment Report

Papers for the above agenda items were circulated for information in advance of the meeting.

MG advised that he has tendered his resignation to the Governing Body Chair & stated that this will be his last meeting.

The meeting ended and section 8 *Report from Academic Council and Registrar* was deferred to the September meeting.

The additional Governing Body meeting will be on 25th August at the Sligo campus.

The September Governing Body meeting is scheduled for Monday 1st September 2025 at the Galway City – Dublin Rd campus.

Signed: Maura McNally S.C.
Chairperson

Date: 1/09/2025