

Record of the Proceedings of the Meeting of the Governing Body of Rose Bruford College of Theatre & Performance held on Thursday 23 January 2025 at the College

Present:

Jennifer Sims (Chair)
Professor Randall Whittaker (Principal and CEO)
Sud Basu
Dr Alex Bols
Daryl Burns (Staff Governor)
Anni Domingo
Helen Fairfoul
Vivien Goodwin
Geraldine Kelly
Dr Phoebe Patey-Ferguson (Staff Governor)
Dr David Reid
Janet Smith
Haydn Tudor Jones (Student Governor)

In attendance:

Professor Stephen Farrier – Deputy Principal
Faye Dunn (Director of Operations).
Michael Healy – Director of Finance
Stuart Page-Dean
Lucy Causon-Executive Officer
Jim Benson – Secretary

2025/01 Welcome

The Chair welcomed everyone and reminded all members and attendees of the need to keep all matters and papers relating to the meeting confidential.

Formalities

2025/02 Apologies

These were received from Veronique Fricke (Director Corporate Affairs).

2025/03 Conflict of Interest Declarations

The Secretary had a standing declaration due to his appointment at the University of East London and Helen Fairfoul has a declaration as a member of the Board of Governors at the University of Northumbria.

2025/04 Confirmation of the Minutes of the Meeting held on 28 November 2024

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 28 November 2024 were confirmed as an accurate record.

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2025/05 Matters arising from the Meeting held on 28 November 2024

05.1 The Chair confirmed that she had conducted the four scheduled appraisals with Board Members and was in the process of drafting a report for Governance and Nominations Committee on the outcomes. She added that the appraisals prompted constructive and positive discussions.

05.2 The Deputy Principal provided the Board with an update on the work undertaken to meet the requirements of the OfS Conditions of Registration around sexual harassment and misconduct. He stated that there had been a briefing for staff in December 2024 and a working party had been established, chaired by Carl Hodgson (Academic Quality, Regulatory and Compliance Manager), to go through the requirements for compliance. The Board was asked to note that the Government had confirmed that the Freedom of Speech legislation was to be introduced and this had implications for how sexual harassment and misconduct was dealt with. It was noted that the statutory tort and Students' Union regulation had been removed from the Freedom of Speech legislation. The Deputy Principal concluded by confirming that the OfS Conditions of Registration around sexual harassment and misconduct would come into effect on 1 August 2025 and that the College was well placed to meet its obligations.

05.3 It was noted that the Deputy Principal would reflect on the comments from the Away Day on the KPIs and raise this under the Principal's report.

05.4 Matters relating to the course portfolio had been dealt with at the Away Day.

05.5 It was noted that progress with addressing the concerns highlighted in the Internal Audit Annual Report and the Internal Audit Plan was ongoing and would be reported to the Board after the matter had been considered by Audit and Risk Committee. The Board also noted the report from the Director of Operations on the ongoing review of the iT Strategy

05.6 The Director of Finance confirmed that the Statement of Corporate Governance in the Annual Accounts reflected the concerns expressed by the Internal Auditors

05.7 It was noted that the Schedule of Delegation had been amended to reflect the new designation titles of staff.

05.8 It was noted that all other matters arising appeared on the agenda or had been attended to.

2025/06 Principal's Report [BG 1-3-1]

06.1 The Principal spoke to the paper and brought the following matters to the Board's attention:

- i. There was reasonable progress being made with student admissions but this was at an early stage with the early application deadline coming up in the next week. With regards to technical courses, interviews were taking place and offers had been made.

Undergraduate acting auditions would take place until May and the aim was to avoid having to go into Clearing for these courses.

ii. There had been good progress with many research initiatives including the work of Dr Phoebe Patey-Ferguson with a special edition of the *Contemporary Theatre Review* on Live Art.

iii. The progress being made with training and developing staff was noted particularly the People and Talent team undertaking investigator training in March 2025.

iv. The Xmas period inevitably meant that external engagements were scaled down but were returning to normal levels in 2025.

06.2 In response to a question by the Board the Principal stated that at present the College had not been adversely affected by President Trump's comments to ban 'diversity, equity and inclusion' (DEI) programmes and applications from the USA were up. He added that he was aware this could become an issue for reclassifying US Federal Aid and become a Condition of Grant so the matter was being monitored by the College Executive Group.

06.3 The Deputy Principal advised that he was planning to report on the KPIs on a quarterly basis. He would also review how some specific KPIs were expressed and planned to highlight where certain KPIs would be routinely included under other reports, such as operational surpluses in the Finance Reports. The Board made the following proposals that the Deputy Principal agreed to consider:

i. To periodically focus on one or a few KPIs each quarter when there might be issues of note to consider;

ii. to include milestone reports and confirm when these would be reported on.

06.4 In response to a question the Principal confirmed that a staff engagement survey had been conducted and the outcomes would be reported to the Board when the results had been analysed.

2025/07 Finance Report-Financial Update [BoG 1-2-2]

07.1 The Director of Finance spoke to the paper outlining the current financial position of the College.

07.3 The Chair stated that there were no decisions for the Board to make but asked that the College Executive Group (CEG) keep the Board informed of developments on the delivery of the revised budget.

Remuneration Committee-10 December 2024 including the Annual Report from the Remuneration Committee

08.1 The Secretary advised that the Board was required to approve the publication of the Annual Report from the Remuneration Committee. He added that it followed a format used in previous years providing details of the Principal's remuneration and the College's approach to senior staff remuneration. The Chair added that the report had been thoroughly scrutinised by the Committee before recommending it to the Board. The Board approved the Annual Report from the Remuneration Committee for publication.

Audit and Risk Committee – 22 November 2024

08.2 The Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee informed the Board that this was the first meeting the Committee had had with the newly appointed Internal Audit and External Audit firms. She advised that the Committee was not in a position to approve the annual accounts and the AGM had to be delayed until 12 December 2024 as the External Audit has not been completed. It was noted that this was no fault of the External Auditors but due to difficulties with getting information from the student record system. The Director of Finance confirmed that the annual accounts were submitted within the deadlines set by the OfS.

08.3 In response to a question the Director of Finance stated that the timing of the Audit and Risk Committee and the AGM in 2025/26 should allow enough time for the annual accounts to be submitted within the deadlines set by the OfS.

Strategy Session

2025/09 Presentation of the Annual Evaluation of the NSS2024 Results [BG 1-3-4]

09.1 The Dean presented the Annual Evaluation of the NSS2024 results advising that while the outcomes were mixed overall the outcome was positive for the College. He stated that the data for 2024 could be compared to 2023 as the same questions were asked. The following matters were brought to the attention of the Board:

- i. There was an overall response rate of 78% but two areas were below the threshold for formal inclusion in the NSS.
- ii. The College's ratings had increased in organisational management but it was rated fairly low previously.
- iii. While ratings for student representation, learning support and well-being support had decreased, the last two categories were still above the sector benchmark.
- iv. Acting and Acting Musicianship scored highly overall.
- v. The anticipated disgruntlement from students studying at the Wigan Campus was noted but intervention had minimised this

09.2 The Dean stated that outcomes were being reviewed by the Quality Office with a view to enhancing quality in each areas. The Board asked that the following matters be reviewed:

- i. The outcomes from the Theatre and Social Change course should be reviewed.
- ii. The need for a review of learning resource provision, particularly in respect of the library.
- iii. Some of the variables in reporting may be due to small cohorts so the impact of this should be checked.

09.3 The President of the Students' Union stated that the outcomes should be reviewed with an aim to improving the student experience. He added that many of the Students' Union events, and other put on by students, had worked well but challenges in planning activities with limited resources and having to accommodate late changes made matters difficult. He advised that students were working with the Principal to restructure the Students' Union budget and constitution to allow for greater flexibility. This included attending to matters such as improving the student spaces, reviewing how the student voice could be put forward and meeting with groups of students to obtain feedback which should have meaningful outcomes by the end of this academic year. The President of the Students' Union concluded by confirming that morale was high amongst the student body and this provided the opportunity to positively build upon the feedback provided through the NSS.

2025/10 Reflections on the KPIs and other issues considered at the away day

This had been dealt with during the Away Day.

Formal Business

2025/11 Office for Students Consultations and Communications [BG 1-1-9]

The report was noted by the Board including the resurrection of the Freedom of Speech Act, although without the imposition of the statutory tort and regulatory oversight of Students' Unions.

2025/12 Board and Committee Calendar 2025/26 [BG 1-3-6]

The report was noted by the Board including the change of dates for the October meeting of the Board and the moving of the AGM and Board meetings to early December.

2025/13 Any other business

There was none.

2025/14 Dates of meetings in 2024/25

Board of Governors meetings in 2024/25 [starting at 2pm]:

Thursday 20 March 2025

Thursday 8 May 2025

Thursday 10 July 2025

2025/15 Board of Governors meetings in 2025/26 [starting at 2pm]:

Thursday 23 October 2025

Thursday 27 November 2025+AGM or Thursday 4 December 2025+AGM

Thursday 22 January 2026+Away Day

Thursday 19 March 2026

Thursday 7 May 2026

Thursday 9 July 2026