

Approved Minutes of the Proceedings of the Meeting of the Governing Body of Rose Bruford College of Theatre & Performance held on Thursday 8 May 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
Geraldine Kelly
Dr Phoebe Patey-Ferguson (Staff Governor)
Dr David Reid
Haydn Tudor Jones (Student Governor)

In attendance:

Professor Stephen Farrier – Deputy Principal
Michael Healy - Chief Finance Officer
Rachael Wilson – Director of Service Delivery for item 6
Stuart Page-Dean
Veronique Fricke-Director Corporate Affairs
Jim Benson - Governance Advisor and Board Secretary
Dawn Turpin - Board and Governance Clerk
Jakki Bardsley - (Head of Academic Data Systems and Statutory Returns) for item 9
Andy Youell - (the External Consultant) for item 9

2025/33 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

2025/34 Apologies

These were received from Vivien Goodwin and Janet Smith.

2025/35 Conflict of Interest Declarations

The Secretary had a standing declaration due to his appointment at the University of East London, Helen Fairfoul had a declaration as a member of the Board of Governors at the University of Northumbria and Dr Alex Bols had a declaration as a member of staff at the University of East Anglia.

2025/36 Confirmation of the Minutes of the Meeting held on 20 March 2025

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 20 March 2025 were confirmed as an accurate record.

2025/37 Matters arising from the Meeting held on 20 March 2025

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

2025/38 Principal's Report [BG 5-1]

38.1 The Principal/CEO spoke to the paper and brought the following matters to the Board's attention:

- i. The work that the College's researchers have been engaged with was highlighted including the development of a system to support external funding bids including a formal process for expressions of interest, established forms for future budgeting and justification of resources. This process should enable researchers to make strong bids in an efficient manner which would further develop progress on the KPI to increase applications for major grant applications.
- ii. The College President, Ray Fearon, attended campus to conduct a Julius Caesar masterclass on 7 April 2025 for the second-year Acting Students which was well received.
- iii. The changes in executive functions with the Director of Operations role being discontinued, replaced in part by the Director of Service Delivery, and the role of the Director of Finance being retitled as the Chief Financial Officer. All related party transactions had also been dealt with as part of this process. The Director of Service Delivery would also be joining the College Executive Group.
- iv. The success of a number of College alumni and students across major industry awards which was having a global impact.
- v. The Principal/CEO had now taken on responsibility for the strategic management of estates as space allocation and usage needed to be managed strategically to maximise opportunities. A document entitled 'Appropriate Activities in Appropriate Spaces' had been produced and circulated to staff, setting out the parameters for the use of space in the College, in Lamorbey House and in the building recently acquired on the adjacent site.
- v. The Principal/CEO's external activities since the last meeting were also noted.

38.2 The Principal/CEO tabled a paper which gave a year by year comparison of undergraduate applications, offers and acceptances between 2020 and 2025. He stated that data for some earlier years was not as useful as a comparison, due to the varying impact Covid had on applications. [Confidential minute]

38.4 In relation to the Principal/CEO's report, the following issues were raised:

- i. The Student Representative expressed appreciation for the improvement in facilities being made available to students but stressed there needed to be more social space and academic space developed. The Principal/CEO stated that the newly acquired building should accommodate this along with the implementation of strategies to reduce over-booking which was a particular issue with performance courses.
- ii. The Principal/CEO advised that there was some information on where the 26 students who appeared to have moved to other institutions had gone. He added that these were students in Stage Management and a few other technical subjects and it was essential in future to ensure that applicants knew what the offer at the College entailed.
- iii. The Principal/CEO stated that while he agreed there was a certain inter-dependence between the ATA and ETA courses, the important strategy was to target the offers rather than to put too much effort into increasing applications.
- iv. The Principal/CEO advised that processes would be automated next year when the student record system will have been developed. This would make the recruitment process more efficient and effective.

38.5 A question was raised about whether international fees could be fixed at a certain level in the country that the student was applying from. The Chief Finance Officer stated that this was possible and he was keen to make the process of fee payment smooth for students. [Confidential minute]

38.6 Following the UK Supreme Court judgment ruling that in the Equality Act 2010 (the Act), 'sex' means biological sex, the Deputy Principal advised that at present no problems had emerged for the College as there was adequate provision of toilets, dressing rooms and the like but further guidance was awaited.

2025/39 Finance Report

Financial Update [BoG 5-2]

[Confidential minute]

Projected Budget 2025/26 [BG 5-3]

[Confidential minute]

2025/40 Key points from minutes of committees

Remuneration Committee – 8 May 2025

40.1 The Chair of the Remuneration Committee advised the Board of the matters that were considered at the meeting that had taken place earlier:

- i. The gender pay report which showed that men at the College were paid on average 20% more than women with a more reliable median pay gap showing a difference of 13%. It was noted that this was essentially due to senior academic staff positions being predominantly held by men with long service records and the lower paid roles largely being held by women. The Committee had asked that this be further reviewed with an action plan produced for addressing the gender pay gap and to provide information of salaries paid to staff with other protected characteristics.
- ii. The Workforce Strategy which was looking at matters such as the position of pay, pensions and staff representation at the College.

40.2 The Chair of the Remuneration Committee stated that the meeting of the Committee scheduled for October would consider further the issues of gender pay and Workforce Strategy and provide a fuller report to the Board in October.

Strategy Session

2025/41 KPI Update: Summary, 'Deep Dives' and Milestone Reports [BG 5-4]

41.1 The Deputy Principal spoke to the paper and stated that the 'deep dives' on KPIs was an iterative process which consisted of the following elements:

- i. A top-level sheet of all KPIs and their current status;
- ii. a graphical representation of each KPI showing the current position, yearly milestones and overall progress to meeting the final target;
- iii. a further analysis and discussion of KPIs 14, 15 and 16.

41.2 The Deputy Principal advised that research related KPIs were chosen due to the information that was available and his own familiarity with the subject matter. In response to a question about the use of research contract applications as a measure, the Deputy Principal stated that this was necessary to galvanise research at the College and there being a lack of information on what applications had been successful. He agreed that measuring the number of successful applications would be introduced in due course. It was also noted that this did not simply cover encouraging staff to submit research contract bids but was part of a process that saw the implementation of research mentors, and research training for all academic staff which encouraged the development of long-term research plans. The reasons for moving the research facilitation arrangements for PhD students from the University of East London to the University of Chichester was also noted. It was confirmed that the University of Chichester could provide a sustainable arrangement for the College.

41.3 It was noted that three of the KPIs covering People and Development and Financial Responsibility had not yet started and one had been rated red. The Chief Financial Officer stated that those relating to Financial Responsibility had only just been

defined and he was working with the Director of Service Delivery to deliver these. Helen Fairfoul offered to advise on the KPIs relating to People and Development.

Formal Business

2025/42 Student Complaints and Academic Appeals: 2023/24 [BG 5-6]

42.1 The Dean spoke to the paper stating that it provided an update on Student Complaints and Appeals for 2023-24 and an update for 2024-25. He stated that during the reporting period there had been staff changes with the Director of Academic Affairs leaving the College and responsibility for this area passing to himself complemented by the appointment of the Student Casework and Student Voice Manager on 1 January 2025. He asked the Board to note that student complaints and related appeals were managed by the Student Casework and Student Voice Manager with academic appeals being dealt with by the Quality Manager. The processes for handling both complaints and appeals were outlined to the Board including the process of when the Completion of Procedures Letter (COP) was issued to the complainant or appellant which informed them of the right to take the matter to the Office for the Independent Adjudicator (OIA).

42.2 The Dean advised that previously since there had been no facility on which to capture data, conducting comparative analysis was difficult, but the numbers provided may partly be a result of launching a system for recording and monitoring both present and historical issues. He added that the apparent lower numbers of complaints and appeals in 2024/25 may be due to the introduction of a 'Report a Concern' facility which allows for earlier intervention. It was noted that the College had no cases with the OIA. The Dean concluded by stating that students did not submit complaints and appeals lightly and the College was keen to show support for whenever students experienced difficulties.

42.3 The Board agreed that the report was more informative than in previous years. The Student Representative stated that developing strategies to address under-reporting of issues was important and there was a fine line between what was regarded as a concern to what materialised as a complaint. He added that having appropriate safeguards in place was essential so students would feel comfortable in raising concerns, with the Students' Union being well placed to making these processes accessible to students. The Student Representative concluded by stating that it was essential to provide training for student representatives in this area.

42.4 In response to a question, the Dean advised that a working party had been established to deal with meeting the requirements of the OfS Condition of Registration on Harassment and Sexual Misconduct. He added that policies and procedures were being reviewed and facilities, such as the single source of information, were being put in place. The Secretary advised that not all aspects of the OfS Condition of Registration would need to be met by 1 August 2025 but a plan to deal with matters such as staff and student training would need to be evidenced.

2025/43 Student Record System – Progress report [BG 5-5]

43.1 Jakki Bardsley (Head of Academic Data Systems and Statutory Returns) and Andy Youell (the External Consultant) advised the Board on progress being made with delivering the new student record system. The Board were asked to note the three documents that had been submitted for consideration:

- i. RBC update and progress report;
- ii. the ESS (Unit-e) highlight report;
- iii. the Project risk register.

43.2 The Head of Academic Data Systems and Statutory Returns reported that good progress was being made although there had been a change to the date of implementing the new system which was agreed once the project had been fully scoped. It was confirmed that the go-live date for Phase 1a would be at the end of July 2025 and the online services functionality would be delivered in Phase 1b at the end of August 2025. In relation to Key Activities and Milestones the following was reported:

- i. Curriculum Design and Migration Scope had been prioritised for sign-off once default users had been identified.
- ii. Assessment and Results Development would start in mid-May 2025 with simulated exam boards coming in at the end of July 2025.
- iii. As Unit-e no longer provide templates for HESES Reporting the team were exploring how other Unit-e HEIs approached this return.
- iv. Data Security and Access Management were having User Groups established with protocols for secure access being defined.
- v. ID Card requirements and processes were under review but should be finalised in defined timescales (encoded vs non-encoded options).

43.3 In discussion the following points were raised:

- i. The Chief Financial Officer advised that 100 days of work had been factored in as contingency in case of delays, which amounted to about £20k, and 60 days had been used as a result of moving the date of implementing the new system.
- ii. Meeting the deadline for the HESES return would not be an issue as this was not due until December. Reports could be built to facilitate the return and discussions were taking place with other institutions about how they went about doing this. The HESES return itself required projected figures and this would not require live data.
- iii. The Risk Register accurately reflected the risks to the project and it was accepted that some deadlines were tight but considered achievable.

2025/44 Staff Engagement Survey [BG 5-7]

44.1 The Deputy Principal spoke to the paper and stated that in October 2024 a proposal was received at CEG from the then HR Advisor about an approach for conducting an Employer Engagement Survey. This was then launched and concluded in late December 2024, the results from which were considered by CEG in March 2025. It was reported:

- i. 59 people completed the survey out of 98 eligible staff, which equated to a completion rate of 60.2% against the KPI of 75% positive engagement. It is recognised that response rates need to improve in future surveys.
- ii. A broader interpretation of the KPI identified some positive responses across the results but with significant variations such as academic staff generally noting a different experience than professional and support staff. Examples included:
 - Leadership communication gap where an overall score of 49 reduced to 33 for academic staff;
 - Performance management clarity where an overall score of 51 reduced to 40 for academic staff.
- iii. With regards to the methodology, the initial analysis of results was presented via an Eisenhower Box analysis and the Employee Engagement Index (EEI) was not expressed as percentage but as a composite score against an EEI maximum value of 100.
- iv. Actions were separated into four categories:
 - Urgent and Significant
 - Not Urgent but Significant
 - Urgent but Not Significant
 - Not Urgent, Not Significant
- v. Most of the work that had been identified for action related to on going projects.
- vi. Overall the results were positive given the transformative changes taking place at the College and, on the whole, were where CEG expected them to be.

44.2 In discussion the following points were raised:

- i. While the results might have been what was expected, it was important to constantly relay to staff where actions were being taken and gathering feedback to make it clear that views were being acted on.
- ii. It was confirmed that feedback from questions asked about the student experience would be fed into the process including views expressed in the NSS. The Dean would be reporting on this to Academic Board.

iii. The KPI on positive staff engagement came from staff but the survey arrived largely unannounced. It was important to make sure staff could plan to complete the survey as those in intensive roles could not prioritise it.

iv. The methodology might require some further work as not expressing outcomes as a percentage gave considerable scope to misunderstanding. More fundamentally, it needed to be determined whether the KPI of 75% positive engagement meant response levels or as an indication of satisfaction.

v. The responses needed to be reflected on from the survey along with what was garnered from students and external stakeholders to see if there were commonly emerging themes. These should be addressed in communications to the different stakeholders.

44.3 The Principal/CEO stated that in respect of the issue of positive engagement being response levels or an indication of satisfaction, both matters needed to be addressed. He confirmed that the survey had been designed by the HR Advisor and could be adjusted. It was intended to run the survey annually. The Deputy Principal concluded by confirming that the process of acknowledging concerns had commenced and it would be followed by commitments to addressing these when actions had been agreed.

2025/45 Update on the Appointment of the Chair of the Board [BG 5-9]

45.1 The Chair of Governance and Nominations Committee spoke to the paper and explained the process that had been adopted for appointing the next Chair of the Board. Expressions of interest were sought and the Governance and Nominations Committee was now in a position to recommend an appointment to the Board. It was noted there were two expressions of interest who were interviewed by the Governance and Nominations Committee. Neither candidate was present while the Board deliberated the appointment. Both were regarded as strong and credible candidates. The Committee's recommendation is based on who was best suited to see the College through the challenges it faced. Should the Board approve the recommendation the start date and terms of office would be confirmed with the person concerned

45.2 The Board confirmed that Janet Smith should be appointed as the next Chair of the Board. It was confirmed that the start date and terms of office would be reported to the next meeting of the Board.

45.3 The Chair of the Board thanked both candidates for expressing an interest in the appointment. Both candidates had thanked the Governance and Nominations Committee for the opportunity and expressed their continued commitment to the College and the Board.

Formal Business

2025/46 Office for Students Consultations and Communications [BG 1-1-9]

46.1 The report was noted by the Board. It was also reported that, following the OfS's sanction against the University of Sussex for regulatory breaches in respect of Freedom of Speech, 19 institutions had been contacted by the OfS expressing similar concerns about their free speech related policies. It was confirmed that the College was not one such institution but work was being undertaken on updating relevant policies. This was noted by the Board.

2025/47 Any other business

Jim Benson was thanked for his services as Governance Advisor and Board Secretary. Dawn Turpin was welcomed as the newly appointed Board and Governance Clerk.

2025/48 Dates of meetings

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

Thursday 10 July 2025

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

Action	Meeting Date	Officer(s) responsible	Due Date
39.4 Provide a budget update for 2025/26 to the Board	8 May 2025	Chief Financial Officer	July and October 2025

40.2 Consider further the issues of gender pay and Workforce Strategy and provide a fuller report to the Board in October	8 May 2025	Chair of the Remuneration Committee/Secretary	October 2025
39.5i. Update on the financial position at Christopher Court	8 May 2025	Chief Financial Officer	July 2025
39.5ii. Confirm the position with HSBC and the requirement for a debenture	8 May 2025	Chief Financial Officer	TBC
45.2 Confirm with Janet Smith the start date and terms of office for commencing as the next Chair of the Board	8 May 2025	Chair of the Board	July 2025