



Board of Governors

Approved minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 19 March 2026 at 2.00pm in the Boardroom

Present: Janet Smith (Chair), Dr David Reid, Geraldine Kelly, Helen Fairfoul, Vivien Goodwin, Chris Payne, Miles Gibson, Dr Alex Bols (from item 7), Anthony Carey (for items 1-16), Haydn Jones (student governor), Dr Phoebe Patey-Ferguson (Academic Board staff governor), Prof Randall Whittaker (Principal and CEO)

Apologies: Anni Domingo, Daryl Burns (support staff governor)

In Attendance: Prof Stephen Farrier, Deputy Principal
Michael Healy, Chief Financial Officer (CFO)
Veronique Fricke, Director of Corporate Affairs
Rachael Wilson, Director of Service Delivery
Dawn Turpin, Clerk to the Board

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

1.1 The Chair welcomed members to the meeting. Apologies were received from Anni Domingo and Daryl Burns.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

2.1 There were no new declarations of interest. Geraldine Kelly declared an interest in the Governance and Nominations Committee agenda item.

3. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

3.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 4 December 2026 were **approved** as a correct record.

4. MATTERS ARISING

4.1 Updates to the actions from the last meeting were **noted**. The CFO confirmed that implementation of the new HR system would enable the annual HR to be produced. In response to a query the CFO confirmed the College had negotiated an additional month from the existing payroll provider in case there were any issues with implementation.

4.2 The Chair reported on action taken by the Board between meetings to approve the TRAC return and the appointment of Miles Gibson to the Governance and Nominations Committee and Chris Payne to the Remuneration Committee.

5. PRINCIPAL AND CEO'S REPORT

- 5.1 The Principal and CEO introduced his report highlighting the significant progress made over the previous 30 months. This included a number of new systems that the College had acquired and implemented contributing to improvements in the College's infrastructure. However he noted that many processes continued to rely on manual processing in Excel e.g. key performance indicators (KPIs). The curriculum review had resulted in 23 programmes entering teach out and 47 members of staff had left the College, eight voluntarily.
- 5.2 The College had hosted a meeting with the Office for Students (OfS) at their request earlier in the month to discuss the impact on the College of supporting the Academy of Live and Recorded Arts (ALRA) market exit. Verbal reassurance had been received that formal mechanisms for ensuring the College did not experience further detriment would be explored; written confirmation of this was being sought.
- 5.3 Responding to governor queries on the £130k claw back arising from an error in the 2022/23 data return the Principal advised that those involved were no longer employed at the College which had been considered to have arisen from incompetence rather than fraud. A Whistleblowing mechanism was in place. No additional sanctions were expected beyond the clawback itself. The Board agreed this constituted a significant governance issue and requested sight of the relevant correspondence from the OfS.
- 5.4 The Principal also tabled the latest UCAS data on admissions noting the encouraging 9.2% increase in applications compared to a sector increase of 5% (-5.8% in Design, Creative and Performing Arts subjects). Changes to the postgraduate (PG) portfolio had also seen an increase in applications. The priority would be the conversion of offers to enrolments.
- 5.5 In response to governors questions the Principal noted that the College would not in the future support students because of a rapid market exit elsewhere. The College had been designated as a Specialist Provider by UCAS. It did have capacity to accommodate additional PG students. The Master of Arts (MA) was a one-year high delivery cost programme, while the two-year Master of Fine Arts (MFA) programme had lower annual costs although historic cost data had not been being recorded. The College Executive Group (CEG) had reviewed the Linklater MFA which had only had one application and would require seven enrolments to make a small contribution. This was a 12-month course and straightforward to model financially. On demographics the Principal advised that applications were drawn from across the world, particularly the United States and Europe, a breakdown would be provided at the end of the cycle.
- 5.6 Governors commended the College on the work being done in research and on alumni recognition and achievements. The Board **noted** the Principal and CEO's report.

Strategic items

6. STRATEGIC PLAN 2024-2027 - KPI REPORT AND DEEP DIVES

- 6.1 The Deputy Principal introduced the paper providing an update on progress against the KPIs and proposing revisions to three indicators – KPI 05 (continuous improvement in graduate outcomes), KPI 08 (100% academic staff (perm) qualified to Level 7 or above) and KPI 15 (Research contracts applied for £500k) - in response to discussion at previous Board meetings.
- 6.2 The Board requested that external graduate outcomes data continue to be presented alongside internal data and contextual information for KPI 05. Governors welcomed the proposed changes noting the potential implications for staff motivation; the data against the

previous expressions of the KPIs should be retained. Updating the KPIs reflected maturity and confidence in the College's development.

- 6.3 On KPI 07 (75% positive engagement with the staff survey) the Chair asked when the analysis would be available. It was confirmed that this would be included as an agenda item at the May 2026 Board meeting.
- 6.4 The Board **noted** the Strategic Plan 2024-27 annual KPI report.

7. COLLEGE RISK REGISTER

- 7.1 The CFO reported that the risk register had been updated to include two new risks relating to UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) and the new HR and payroll system. The risk register had been reviewed by the Audit and Risk Committee at its meeting on 23 February 2026. The residual risk score for the HR system was expected to reduce once the system was fully implemented.
- 7.2 In relation to the UKVI risk, the Principal advised that additional resource had been allocated to strengthen attendance monitoring which was being reported to CEG weekly whilst this developed. A mock inspection had been conducted with recommendations being implemented to move the College beyond compliance.
- 7.3 Responding to a query about the appropriateness of residual risk scores, the Principal noted that these assessments involved a degree of subjectivity. A governor agreed, adding that the residual scores should both the effectiveness and the progress of the mitigating actions.
- 7.4 The Board **noted** the College's risk register.

Academic and student items

8. STUDENT UNION (SU) UPDATE

- 8.1 The SU President reported on the launch of the BRU FEST festival, replacing the Symposium after 24 years, which was taking place from 7-9 April featuring 36 performances across three venues providing opportunity to showcase student work and strengthen the College's external profile in an operationally sustainable way.
- 8.2 Progress was being made in enhancing student spaces and recent student engagement activities included a St Patrick's day event with proceeds going to Aspire Northern Ireland. Plans for summer events including the Ball and Boat party were being developed.
- 8.3 Student feedback had highlighted concerns regarding deadnaming which the CEG were reviewing. Improvements to SU communications were in development including a newsletter. There were 17 active societies with recent additions including Netball/ Basketball and two devising societies - Karate and Musical Theatre.
- 8.4 The SU continued to engage in national policy discussions with representation at the National Lobby Day and participation in the upcoming Equity Conference 2026.
- 8.5 In response to governor questions the SU President confirmed risk assessments were undertaken for events, that students could bring two guests to BRU FEST – governors would also be welcome to attend.
- 8.6 With thanks the Board **noted** the SU update.

9. STUDENT PROTECTION PLAN

- 9.1 The Principal noted that all providers registered with the Office for Students (OfS) were required to have a plan setting out what students could expect in order to continue their studies should a course, programme, campus or institution close. The students based at the Wigan campus were protected by this Plan. The Plan had not materially changed since developed in 2024.
- 9.2 In response to a governor query another governor advised that the Plans were intentionally high level, with detailed arrangements for where students would be taught or transferred held in supporting documentation. The governor further suggested the College re-date the Plan to demonstrate it was being regularly reviewed in line with OfS expectations.

10. DEGREE OUTCOMES STATEMENT

- 10.1 The Principal introduced the College's annual Degree Outcomes Statement providing degree classification trends for undergraduate students from 2020/21 to 2024/25. This was the first time such comprehensive data had been available to the Board, made possible by recent improvements to College systems. The report illustrated the impact on the College of supporting the completion of ALRA students. The Principal noted there had been a good discussion of the Statement by the Academic Board as reflected in its minutes.
- 10.2 In response to governor queries, the Principal noted that although the OfS did recognise the College's status as a specialist provider, the College needed to articulate this more clearly in relation to its comparatively high number of first-class awards. The College's academic regulations – originally based on those of the University of Manchester – were due for review to reflect the College's own framework. Modelling and an equality impact assessment would be undertaken on the proposal to revise borderline consideration rules for students whose overall mark was on the threshold of a higher degree classification. In practice unclassified awards reflected students who had not completed the dissertation component.
- 10.3 The Principal observed that the increase in the number of first-class degrees awarded might reflect the post Covid "bump" experienced across the sector, although the College's highly bespoke intensive provision, which would become the sole model of delivery following the curriculum review, was also likely a contributing factor. A governor noted that the proportion of firsts was higher than the OfS "expected" sector benchmark and suggested benchmarking this against competitor institutions. Another governor suggested introducing a prize to recognise students achieving high first-class awards.
- 10.4 The Board **approved** the College's Degree Outcomes Statement.

11. ACADEMIC BOARD MINUTES

- 11.1 The Principal drew the Board's attention to the Collaborative Provision report, appended to the Academic Board minutes, that provided an update on the oversight arrangements for the three collaborative programmes running with partners during 2025/26 together with an update on College provision at Wigan. The College's retained legal advisers were reviewing the contract with the School of Theatre Excellence.
- 11.2 **[Confidential minute]**
- 11.3 The Board **noted** the minutes of the meeting of the Academic Board held on 18 February 2026 and the appended Collaborative Provision 2025/26 update report.

12. ACADEMIC INTERFERENCE REPORTING GUIDANCE

- 12.1 The Board **noted** the Academic Interference Reporting Guidance published by the Government on 9 February 2026.

13. FINANCIAL UPDATE 2025/26

- 13.1 The CFO presented the updated forecast for the year ending 31 July 2026.
[Confidential minute]
- 13.5 The Chair acknowledged the additional time appropriately taken on this important item. The Board **noted** the update on the 2025/26 financial year.

Compliance items

14. OFS CONDITIONS OF REGISTRATION MAPPING

- 14.1 The Principal noted in relation to the amber rating against conditions A1 and A2 (Access and Participation) that only one of the Year 1 targets had not yet been delivered. However, this was expected to move to a green rating with investment in funding regional auditions.
- 14.2 The Board **noted** the mapping of the College's practice to the OfS conditions of registration.

Governance and Committee items

15. AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE

- 15.1 The Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee noting that one internal audit report on the College's assets and estate had been delivered. The report had not included an opinion on the College's listed buildings which reflected insufficient evidence rather than a negative opinion.
- 15.2 The Board:
- a. **noted** the minutes of the meeting of the Audit and Risk Committee held on 23 February 2026
 - b. **approved** the revised Terms of Reference for the Audit and Risk Committee.

16. GOVERNANCE AND NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE

- 16.1 The Chair of the Governance and Nominations Committee reported on the meeting held on 9 March 2026 which had considered governor succession planning, student engagement in governance and had made a number of recommendations to the Committee included on the Board's agenda. One recommendation relating to the Standing Orders had been omitted from the papers and would be circulated after the meeting via Convene (board portal) for approval.

Action: Clerk to circulate the revised Standing Orders to the Board for approval.

Geraldine Kelly left the meeting

- 16.2 The Board, on the recommendation of the Governance and Nominations Committee, **approved** the appointment of Geraldine Kelly as Deputy Chair of the Board of Governors.

Geraldine Kelly rejoined the meeting

- 16.3 The Board, on the recommendation of the Governance and Nominations Committee, approved the Board meeting schedule for 2026/27, specifically trialling a schedule of four Board meetings a year (Oct, Nov, Mar and July) and one full day strategic away day in May.
- 16.4 The Board, on the recommendation of the Governance and Nominations Committee, approved the Board of Governors Communications Protocol, subject to clarification regarding communications with the Senior Independent Governor (SIG) and confirmation of the College's practice of monitoring email accounts.

Action: Clerk to confirm the position on private communications with the SIG and on email monitoring when finalising the Board of Governors Communications Protocol.

Anthony Carey left the meeting.

17. REMUNERATION COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2024/25

- 17.1 In the absence of the Remuneration Committee Chair the Clerk reported that the College, as a registered HE provider, was required to publish an annual Remuneration Report in compliance with the CUC HE Senior Staff Remuneration Code. The report had been reviewed by the Remuneration Committee. Forward looking information on the Principal and CEO's salary would be removed prior to publication.
- 17.2 The Board **approved** the Remuneration Committee annual report for 2024/25.

Closing items

18. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- 18.1 In discussion of good governance practice it was agreed that 'Any Other Business' no longer be included on meeting agendas. Any additional items for the agenda should be raised with the Chair in advance of the meeting, and the Chair will determine whether they are added to the agenda.
- 18.2 It was noted, as recorded in the minutes of the Governance and Nominations Committee, that Sud Basu had resigned from the Board due to overseas work commitments; the Board recorded its thanks to Sud for his service.

19. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- 19.1 The Board **noted** the dates of the remaining meetings being held in 2025/26, all starting at 2.00pm:
- 7 May 2026
 - 9 July 2026

Dawn Turpin
Clerk to the Board
24 March 2026

Appendix

Action tracker

Minute	Action
July 2025	
Minute 9, CFO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - review the format of the HR annual report and resubmit to the next meeting of the Board being held on 23 October. <p>This action is paused pending implementation of new HR systems that would enable improved data monitoring and reporting</p>
March 2026	
Minute 16.1, Clerk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - circulate the revised Standing Orders to the Board for approval.
Minute 16.4, Clerk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - confirm the position on private communications with the SIG and on email monitoring when finalising the Board of Governors Communications Protocol.