



MEETING OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES 18 SEPTEMBER 2025

REDACTED MINUTES FOR PUBLICATION

A meeting of the Board of Trustees was held at Horizons, 60 Queen's Road, Reading RG1 4BS from 12.15-16.00pm on Thursday 18 September 2025.

Present:	Prof. N Braisby (NB) C Costigan (CC) A Denton (AD) J Gill (JG) J Hubert (JH) Prof M Jones (MJ) R Kerslake CBE (RK) Dr L Marr (LM) P McCrea OBE (PM) B McManus (BM) D O'Rourke (DOR) J Quinn (JQ) G Scott (GS) C Thackeray (CT) A Wheaton (AW)	(Student Trustee) (Staff Trustee) (Chair) (Student Trustee) (Staff Trustee) (Vice Chancellor)
In attendance:	C Augustine (CA) L Carmichael (LC) D Balme (DB) S Bartle (SB) S Elliott (SE) J Fawkes (JEF) Dr W Finlay (WF) L Gaitskell (LG) R Higgins (RH) L Hughes (LH) A Williams (AWi)	(Board Apprentice) (Co-Opted Member) (Chief Operating Officer) (Pro Vice Chancellor Commercial) For lunch and learn item only (Deputy Vice Chancellor & University Secretary) (Pro Vice Chancellor Education & Students) (Board Apprentice) For lunch and learn item only (Clerk to the Board) (Executive Director Innovation & Partnerships)
Apologies:	N Hughes (NH)	

LUNCH AND LEARN

13710 UNIVERSITY OF THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT SAFEGUARDING AND TRUSTEE RESPONSIBILITIES

- 13711 Prior to the formal meeting commencing, a lunch and learn session was held featuring a presentation by Sophie Elliott (Director of Student Services), Richard Higgins (Head of Disability and Welfare) and Lead Trustee for Safeguarding, Jules Quinn, on the institution's safeguarding responsibilities and specifically the responsibilities of all Trustees. The slide deck for the presentation was shared on the Trustee Portal. Within the presentation, SE/RH highlighted the provisions and processes UBE has in place for welfare and for safeguarding cases and the numbers of cases the institution handles. It also summarised Ofsted expectations in this area and what Trustees really need to know.
- 13712 Jules Quinn, Lead Trustee for Safeguarding, assured the Board of her involvement in monthly meetings with the team and in the well managed work of the team which is keeping the institution safe. She thanked the team for all they do, the presentation they provided to the Board and for reiterating the message that the responsibility for safeguarding is that of the whole Board and every member of it, not just those with direct roles.
- 13713 At the close of the presentation, there was discussion and questions from the Trustees. These focused on the institution's approach to the new condition of registration E6 on sexual misconduct and harassment, which has focused on minor policy adjustments and developing student training. The Board queried why no academic staff were in the wider safeguarding and welfare team. RH assured the Board that the staff in the academic team are all well trained, understand the processes to follow when cases arise and that the referral system is working effectively regardless of the specialisms of staff within the team. Workload has generally been the constraining factor in academic involvement at this level, but RH will consider recruiting an academic for the future.
- 13714 The Board queried the numbers of referrals and overall case load, which is typically around 25 open/amber cases at any one time. The Board queried resourcing for this area of work, which RH confirmed is adequate for demand currently and that process efficiencies could help this in the future if/when demand increases further. The Board also questioned how the institution defines the scope of its role given the online model and the tripartite approach to education with employers. UBE recognises the limits to its influence so tends to adopt a guidance and support-based approach, setting expectations on how much help can realistically be given. Finally, the Board queried the staff training statistics (which stand at over 90%) given that training is a key mitigant in safeguarding. The institution does

adopt a zero-tolerance approach to completion of training but with refresher training staff get a 3-month window to complete the training, as do new joiners, so it is virtually impossible to get this statistic to 100% at any given time.

13715 The competence and capability within the team at the institution was highly praised, especially having scored the highest NSS score in the sector for safeguarding provision in 2024. The Board particularly wished to recognise those staff doing their safeguarding roles over and above their paid work roles.

13716 At the close of the discussion, the Chair thanked SE/RH for all their work in this area and invited them to leave the meeting.

1) GENERAL BOARD GOVERNANCE

13717 1.1) DECLARATION OF ANY CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

13718 There was a conflict of interest reported for Chrystal Augustine for agenda item 3.1 and she will leave the meeting for the discussion. There were no other conflicts of interest reported.

13719 1.2) APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND WELCOMES

13720 There were apologies for absence from Nick Hughes.

13721 The Chair welcomed Lucy Carmichael to her first meeting as a Co-Opted Member of the Board.

13722 1.3) APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD 10 JULY 2025

13723 The minutes and the proposed redactions of the Board of Trustees meeting held on 10 July 2025 (as provided at paper 1.3) were **APPROVED** as a true record and signed by the Chair. They will be published on the University's Governance webpage.

13724 1.4) MATTERS ARISING AND ACTIONS SUMMARY

13725 The summary showing the outcomes of actions from the meeting held 10 July 2025 (paper 1.4) was taken as read with updates on listed actions duly **NOTED**. It was also noted that a decision had been made in conjunction with the Chair to defer the Employee Engagement Survey to January 2026 (rather than November) to allow sufficient time to make an impact and to ensure the full results analysis can be taken to the Board in March for scrutiny, given the Board's ongoing concerns. It was also noted that the applicability of the Freedom of Speech legislation on the University relative

to its operations in Hong Kong was actually rather complex to determine and that legal advice was therefore being sought, which will be reported on at the next meeting.

13726 **1.5) VICE CHAIR ROLE**

13727 Ros Kerslake CBE left the meeting room for this item.

13728 The University Secretary updated the Board on the role of Vice Chair at the institution. Prof. Nick Braisby stepped down from the role with effect from 31 August 2025 REDACTED

13729 The University Secretary then advised that Trustees had been asked to notify the University Secretary if they would be interested in becoming Vice Chair. Ros Kerslake CBE, following informal conversations with various members of the Board, has indicated that she would be willing to become Vice Chair. Nominations & Governance Committee considered the appointment via Chairs Action and now recommends it to the Board to approve. The Committee, when it meets in October, will consider how the higher education voice can still be heard at the Board Leadership Group, potentially through the role of a Senior Independent Governor with higher education expertise. The appointment has been recommended for one year initially in order to allow for the composition of the Board Leadership Group to be re-evaluated sooner and to take account of NB's current position.

13730 It was suggested that the appointment of more than one Vice Chair to support the Chair in his activities should also be considered by the Committee and could be built into the Royal Charter revisions before they are submitted to the Privy Council. Nominations & Governance Committee will have this discussion in October.

13731 The Board **NOTED** the resignation of Professor Nick Braisby as Vice Chair of the UBE Board of Trustees. The Board **APPROVED** the appointment of Ros Kerslake CBE as Vice Chair of the Board of Trustees for an initial period of one year. The Board **NOTED** that Nominations and Governance Committee will consider how academic insight can still be provided within the Board Leadership Group where appropriate. The Board also **NOTED** that Jules Quinn will take on the role of Chair of Nominations and Governance Committee (previously Vice Chair of the Committee).

13732 Ros Kerslake returned to the meeting and was congratulated on her appointment and a small thank you gift was presented to Nick Braisby.

13733 1.6) PRIVY COUNCIL UPDATE ON LEGAL NAME CHANGE TO UNIVERSITY OF THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

13734 The University Secretary gave an update on the legal and regulatory processes now being followed to complete the **legal** name change from University College of Estate Management (UCEM) to University of the Built Environment with the OfS and the Privy Council (paper 1.6). REDACTED. The Privy Council, following informal consultation, has confirmed that other proposed changes to the University's Royal Charter are acceptable and should now be submitted. Nominations & Governance Committee reviewed and pre-approved these changes in February 2025 and it was now recommended that the Board approves the amendments and the submission to the Privy Council for its formal approval.

13735 It was noted that the changes still refer to 'University College' rather than 'University' but that this change will form part of the final update to be submitted at the secondary Supplemental Charter stage. It was noted that the document refers to a Vice Chair, but, as per minute 13730 above, this may be the moment to include Vice Chairs instead – the University Secretary will discuss this with Pinsent Masons ahead of submission. It was noted that much of the Royal Charter wording would be removed into the Regulations and that these were also reviewed and pre-approved by Nominations & Governance Committee. Whilst the Board welcomed the majority of the text being removed to the Regulations so that the institution has greater control over any changes it may wish to implement in the future, it was suggested that where reference to the library is made within the Charter, something should still be retained on knowledge being openly accessible. The University Secretary was asked to also work on this wording with Pinsent Masons.

ACTION: Discuss more than one Vice Chair role to be included in the Royal Charter amendments being proposed with legal advisers ahead of submission to the Privy Council. [JEF]
Revise the wording in the Royal Charter proposed amendments regarding knowledge being openly accessible ahead of submission to the Privy Council. [JEF]

13736 The Board discussed the merits of changing the name of Academic Board to Senate whilst the opportunity to do so was available. Ultimately, it decided the name was not important, but what it does is, and this is already well-defined so the Board agreed it would not pursue a name change to Senate.

13737 The Board **NOTED** the update on progress with the legal name change of UCEM to University of the Built Environment and that it is likely to continue to take additional time before it is successfully concluded. It congratulated the

Vice Chancellor and his team on the achievement of this major milestone for the University.

- 13738 The Board **APPROVED** the Royal Charter amendments as set out in papers 1.6a and 1.6b subject to the University Secretary making the two additional amendments discussed relating to open access to knowledge and provision for Vice Chairs (plural rather than singular) and subject to any amendments required by His Majesty and are agreed by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor.

2) UNIVERSITY UPDATE

13739 2.1) VICE CHANCELLOR'S UPDATE

- 13740 A University progress update was provided by the Vice Chancellor (paper 2.1). The coloured RAG ratings in the report reflect the status of the CX9 objectives at this very early stage of the 2025–26 year, and many were not reported on at all as yet. Some additional commentary on internal and external work taking place at the current time was also provided, alongside the full results analysis for NSS 2025 at paper 2.1a and the Employee Engagement Action Plan at paper 2.1b.

- 13741 It was reported that new student enrolment for the autumn concludes in ten days and is currently standing at 940 enrolments against a target of 1048 with an anticipated final result in the region of 1,100. Performance is, however, uneven across programmes and markets. B2B recruitment remains strong with the largest ever single intake of apprentices having been recruited (670). New programmes such as the MSc in Urban Planning are also doing well (20–25 enrolments now anticipated) despite the ongoing lack of accreditation from the RTPI whilst the institution works to become an accredited planning school. This success is down to Samer Bageen's role as programme leader. The final number of students on the LSA programme was 25 which did not meet the initial target nor revised forecast provided to the Board. The primary reason being insufficient placement opportunities offered by employers in the enrolment process and to having started the entire recruitment process some 4 months later than normal (following completion of the merger). Planning for the 2026 intake has already commenced. Recruitment in Hong Kong has also been lower than forecast and a full review/update on the operation there will be brought to the Board in December 2025.

ACTION: Ensure a full Board update and review of the Hong Kong operations is scheduled for the December 2025 Board meeting. [JEF]

13742 It was noted that there had been a very positive reaction to the appointment of Lee Ivett (from a very strong field of candidates) as Head of School at the LSA and that he should come to a future meeting of the Board.

ACTION: Invite Lee Ivett to a 2026 Board meeting to share his vision for the School of Architecture. [JEF]

13743 Income YTD (month one) was not provided to the Board, but it was queried whether the low numbers recruited on the LSA programme would negatively impact this. The Vice Chancellor assured the Board that the overperformance in other areas should result in a £0.5M uplift in income.

13744 The Vice Chancellor reported that the outturn for the year ended 31 July 2025 remains subject to audit but has been positive at £23,150K income (original budget £22,296K), with an operating margin outturn of 9.3% (target 6%) and a statutory surplus of £1,778K. The auditors completed their fieldwork this week and nothing of significance had been raised.

13745 Paper 2.1a provided the full analysis of the NSS Results 2025. Overall, it shows many results above benchmark but a lack of satisfaction in apprenticeships. The team's focus is on better understanding why this is and what can be done about it, particularly given that their experiences academically are identical to non-apprentice students.

13746 The Board welcomed the NSS analysis but would have welcomed an associated action plan, particularly as the window to impact scores before the next survey starts in January is so small. The institution is focused on ensuring the final experience of those who will respond in 2026 is positive but recognises that actions it takes are more likely to impact future cohorts and surveys.

13747 Paper 2.1b provided the Executive Team's initial Employee Engagement Survey Action Plan following further detailed analysis of the results. It was recognised that there are some very polarised results within teams and departments but broadly speaking the primary area of focus is in the academic and professional services teams. Workload, resourcing and pay were particularly sighted in these areas. One positive action in response to the survey is the introduction of a two-day academic conference to be held in Birmingham this autumn. In addition, the senior team leaders are holding forums with their staff to better understand the issues and to develop solutions together. It was, however, concerning to the Board that the teams with the most contact with students are the least satisfied and that NSS satisfaction had also dipped this year.

13748 In other observations, the Board requested that the terminology used in the action plan where 'underperforming' is used to describe teams that scored

low should be immediately changed to less satisfied/lower scoring so as not to imply any criticism of specific teams. It was also queried whether the Executive Team members have specific actions in their objectives around employee engagement, rather than just the Senior Leadership Team/Line Managers – it was confirmed that all Executive Team members do have this specific target. It was also suggested that the scores probably reflect the rate and pace of change at the institution and staff need to be better helped to understand and cope with this, as change is likely to be a constant going forwards. Communications will need to be enhanced to staff around the emerging action plan and through a 'you said, we did' approach. It was suggested by the Staff Trustees that this approach would be particularly welcome as many have attended forums with the Vice Chancellor and the COO/HR Director in the last year and given their time willingly but have not really been communicated with/seen any action or change afterwards.

ACTION: Update the terminology in the Employee Engagement Survey Action Plan document. [DB]

- 13749 Overall, the Board welcomed the proposed approach to improving employee satisfaction and will leave the Executive to work towards the desired impact.
- 13750 The final part of the report provided information on the external influencing activities the Vice Chancellor has been undertaking. The Vice Chancellor drew specific attention to the potential changes and impacts the institution now needs to be considering as a result of the recent Cabinet reshuffle and resignation of the Deputy Prime Minister. These changes have resulted in the disempowerment of Skills England and the move of the skills portfolio to the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP), which is in itself a strong sign that the priority is now about employment and not skills (getting into work, not necessarily into higher education). REDACTED
- 13751 The Vice Chancellor also advised the Board that his role on the Construction Skills Mission Board has led to the convening of a 'professional bodies of the built environment sector' event focussed on the potential for a general level 4 entry standard which would allow later specialism in any built environment discipline. REDACTED. Finally, the Vice Chancellor advised that the soft launch of the Built Environment Futures Assembly took place this week.
- 13752 The Board **NOTED** the Vice Chancellor's update on early progress for 2025-26.

13753 **2.2) PRODUCTIVITY COMMITMENT**

- 13754 The Chief Operating Officer presented paper 2.2 to the Board which provided the plans for Productivity in 2025-26 and beyond, also presenting to the Board the People and Digital Strategies recently internally agreed.
- 13755 Essentially there are six strands to the productivity work – Digital Strategy, People Strategy (to which some minor amendments will be made following input from JQ), an emerging Finance Strategy (to be finalised by December 2025), an Estates Strategy (requires longer-term input), with each strand underpinned by the work and support of the Strategy and Planning Office and the Productivity Team. Several ideas for productivity are already being scoped and costed, and the benefits assessed to inform the work plan that will be delivered. The aim will be to reduce staff cost ratios as the institution grows.
- 13756 It was suggested that the current scoping work might benefit from an 'as is' assessment, specifically with regards to the digital estate. This approach would also help with measurability and impact assessment. The AI project currently under way is also informing this stage of work. It was also suggested that the institution could adopt an approach that defines job roles much more widely and allows flexibility in deployment of resource as and when needed.
- 13757 Finally, the Board commented that whilst the approach is welcomed in general, there is not enough emerging in any of the documents shared to date on students and the institution's mission to educate which should be the driver behind all actions. It should seek to articulate the benefits of this work not just to staff and the bottom line but to students.
- 13758 The Board **NOTED** the institution's Productivity Commitment and the recently approved People and Digital Strategies, suggesting some amendments and enhancements that would improve the focus which will be taken forward by the COO.

13759 2.3) OFSTED READINESS

- 13760 The Pro Vice Chancellor Education and Students provided the Board with an overview of the institution's Ofsted Readiness (paper 2.3), given that an inspection of UBE's apprenticeships provision is anticipated within the next 12-18 months. The report covered the institution's preparations and the nature of the inspection itself. Whilst the University secured a 'good' judgement in November 2021, there have been changes announced to the Ofsted Inspection Framework. Which now does not feature single word outcomes but takes a scorecard approach. The paper outlines how the University is adapting to the new Framework (which is based on a 4 year, rather than a 5-year cycle), and which includes the launch of an Ofsted

Working Group to coordinate and lead on the preparations. Regular updates will come to the Board through the next twelve months.

13761 It was suggested that the University should consider taking consultancy support and running another Mocksted as part of its preparations. Whilst this is an aspiration, finding consultants with enough experience of the new framework may be challenging. It was also queried how this work will fit with the workload issues evident in the Employee Engagement Survey. The Pro Vice Chancellor Education and Students advised that this is not additional work to prepare solely for an inspection but the ongoing adoption of a way of being that meets Ofsted requirements.

13762 The Board **NOTED** the institution's plans to prepare for an Ofsted Inspection within the next 12-18 months.

3) PROPERTY UPDATE

13763 **3.1) REDACTED**

13764 REDACTED

13765 REDACTED

13766 REDACTED

13767 REDACTED

13768 REDACTED

13769 REDACTED

13770 REDACTED.

4) STRATEGIC DISCUSSION

13771 **4.1) THE UNIVERSITY OF THE FUTURE – WHAT DOES UBE LOOK LIKE IN 2050?**

13772 REDACTED

13773 REDACTED

13774 REDACTED

13775 REDACTED

13776 REDACTED

13777 REDACTED

13778 REDACTED

13779 REDACTED

13780 REDACTED

13781 The Chair thanked everyone for their participation and proposed such a strategic session is held at least once a year by the Board.

5) ANY OTHER BUSINESS

13782 5.1) MATTERS FOR NOTING, APPROVAL AND REPORT

13783 The Board was invited to make comments on the additional Board paper of matters for report and approval (items 6 and 7). Particular attention was drawn to the Health and Safety Report which did not cover the LSA premises at the current time. The Board was assured that there are no issues to raise and that all essential works required had been undertaken and completed at the site. No other comments were made so all matters were deemed approved and noted (as below).

13784 5.2) ANY OTHER BUSINESS

13785 The Chair reminded all Trustees that there was a further briefing for Trustees on research taking place on 8 October 2025 at lunchtime via Zoom and all Trustees are welcome to attend.

13786 The Chair informed the Board that due to time pressures he had decided to stand down from the Chair role from 31 January 2026 with regret and thanked everyone for their support to him to date. Nominations & Governance Committee will be asked to consider next steps and therefore no comments/discussion took place in response to this announcement.

13787 There being no other items of business raised, the Chair thanked all Trustees for their participation in the meeting.

13788 5.3) MEETING CLOSE

13789 The Chair closed the meeting at 16.01pm.

13790 **5.4) DRINKS RECEPTION**

13791 A drinks reception was held at the close of the meeting for Trustees with members of the University's staff.

The following matters were circulated in a separate pack for approval or report in advance of the meeting.

6) MATTERS FOR APPROVAL OR REPORT**13792** **6.1) POLICY REVIEW**

13793 The Board delayed the approval of the Anti-Bribery Policy V4.01, pending some comments received from the Chair regarding the applicability of the policy to Trustees being addressed.

ACTION: Consider the Chair's comments about applicability of the policy to Trustees ahead of re-presenting for approval pending any further changes. [JEF]

13794 The Board **APPROVED** the Privacy Policy V7.01 for publication as the new V8.00.

13795 The Board **APPROVED** the Board Conflicts of Interest Policy V7.01 for publication as the new V8.00.

13796 The Board **APPROVED** the Code of Practice Safeguarding and Prevent V10.02 for publication as the new V11.00.

13797 The Board **APPROVED** the Safeguarding Procedure V5.02 for publication as the new V6.00.

13798 The Board **APPROVED** the Safeguarding and Prevent Appendices V0.02 for publication as V1.00.

ACTION: Finalise and publish as necessary all updated and approved University policies.

13799 **6.2) ACADEMIC REPORTS**

13800 The Board **APPROVED** the Apprenticeships Self-Assessment Position Statement 3.

13801 The Board **APPROVED** the Concordat – Annual Statement on Research Integrity.

7) OTHER MATTERS FOR NOTING ONLY

13802 7.1) TRUSTEE CALENDAR

13803 The Board **NOTED** the Trustee calendar of dates for 2025, noting the minor updates recently made.

13804 The Board **NOTED** the Trustee calendar of dates for 2026, which may be revised in October 2025 when a full review of the Board schedule will take place.

13805 7.2) REPORT ON HEALTH AND SAFETY

13806 The Board **NOTED** the latest report on Health and Safety.

13807 7.3) UBE COMPLAINTS, APPEALS AND WHISTLEBLOWING REPORT

13808 The Board **NOTED** the data on complaints made to University of the Built Environment in Quarter 4 2024-25 as detailed in paper 7.3.

13809 The Board **NOTED** the data on appeals cases in Quarter 4 2024-25 as detailed in paper 7.3.

13810 The Board **NOTED** that there had been no whistleblowing cases.

13811 The Board **NOTED** the OIA cases in Quarter 4 2024-25 as detailed in paper 7.3.

13812 7.4) DATA PROTECTION REPORT

13813 The Board **NOTED** the five minor data protection breaches in the July-August 2025 period, and that there were no Data Subject Access Requests or third-party disclosures (paper 7.4). The Board **NOTED** that the overall rate of breaches remains low. The Board also **NOTED** that the data protection function at the University is still being managed on an outsourced basis via Evalian.

13814 7.5) STAFF ORGANISATION CHART


13815 An updated Senior Level University staff organisational chart by department / SLT level was provided at paper 7.5 and **NOTED** by the Board.

Date of next meeting:

Wednesday 3 December 2025

Meetings before 3 December 2025:

1 October 2025 – Property Working Group
8 October 2025 – Nominations and Governance Committee
9 October 2025 – Built Environment Award Luncheon
29 October 2025 – Remuneration Committee
13 November 2025 – Audit Committee
13 November 2025 – Joint Audit and Finance Committee
13 November 2025 – Finance Committee
20 November 2025 – Academic Assurance Committee
4 December 2025 – Quarterly Business Review

Signed 

Name Ros Kerslake CBE

Position Chair of the Board of Trustees

Date 03 December 2025