



**Trustee Board Minutes (Amalgamated with Finance & General Purposes Committee)  
Held on 27<sup>th</sup> May 2020 by Skype**

**Present:**

Andrew McAnallen, President (Chair)  
 Aaron Ward, Lay Trustee  
 Nicole Parkinson-Kelly, Vice President Education  
 Kirsten Watters, Lay Trustee  
 Chris Chambers, Vice President Sports & Wellbeing  
 Collette Cassidy, Vice President, Magee  
 Thomas Logue, Student Trustee  
 Ashley Neill, Lay Trustee

David Longstaff, Chief Executive  
 Colin Campbell, Operations Director  
 Clodagh Kennedy, Finance Director

**In Attendance:**

Shauna Murphy, Vice President, Belfast  
 Owen McCloskey, Vice President, Coleraine  
 Jackie Taggart, Note Taker

Meeting Notes	Action	Update
<b>Agenda item 1: Welcome:</b> The Chair welcomed everyone and thanked them for attending the last meeting of the year.		
<b>Agenda item 2: Apologies:</b> CCon and AH		
<b>Agenda item 3: Declaration of Interest:</b> There were no declarations.		
<b>Agenda item 4: Starred Items:</b> There were no starred items.		
<b>Agenda item 5: Minutes:</b> Minutes of 25 <sup>th</sup> February 2020 were approved.		
<b>Agenda item 6: Matters Arising:</b>		

<p>AMcA advised that he and DL had hoped to meet with RS in April, but this had not been possible due to Covid-19, although they will meet with him when it is safe to do so and had passed on thanks verbally.</p> <p>DL advised that the Sports Services process had been delayed and he had checked on the timeline position with AC who feels a draft paper will be available by the end of July. CCh and DL will attend a Sub-Group meeting in July to get a steer as to when ND can present to this meeting.</p> <p>AH was not available so the matter on tweaking the Course Reps Training was deferred until her return. DL explained there had been an adverse effect on the amount of people attending the training and there is the opportunity to change to digital training this year and perhaps make it mandatory for Course Reps' terms of their appointment. AH will take this forward on her return to the office.</p> <p>Vice Chair Appointment: AMcA advised that he had received no responses. If anyone is interested, please contact him or DL by the end of the week.</p> <p>NPK joined the meeting.</p>		
<p><b>Agenda item 7: Chair's Communication:</b></p> <p>AMcA advised that there were a lot of updates in context of Covid-19.</p> <p>Through lobbying, the University released 1,437 students from their on-campus accommodation contracts. 80% of students live in Halls, so this was a major achievement. The Advice Bureau has had one to one case referrals with Housing Rights NI on private student rentals as many students were faced with loss of jobs and furloughed due to the lock-down. We are lobbying the Minister of Communities with the National Unions, NUS and USI for further student focused concessions. Whilst they have been supportive, it was made clear that the NI Assembly do not have devolved powers for legislation on private rentals and we are trying to galvanise these issues and gain political support to lobby Westminster. Also managed to get students released from purpose-built accommodation contracts early. This was another major win in terms of housing.</p> <p>Regarding Academic Affairs, we supported students in the Belfast School of Art to secure a space at the Mac for an end of year show which SM headed. The show will be held at a later date.</p>		

There are a plethora of Committees relating to Covid-19 which UUSU are involved in. Graduation which should have taken place in July was postponed. We are working with the University on this, currently organising Focus Groups to ensure student opinion is factored into the plan.

Due to lock-down, the nature of our campus portfolios has diminished, and we are steering the team to cover all areas of business through realigned priorities. Academic Affairs are covered by CCass and NPK, Activities by OK and OMcC and CCh and SM are covering Diversity.

We worked with NUS/USI to acquire an additional £2,8000,000 as a hardship fund in NI to support students at this time.

We are holding staff, students, and Alumni Quizzes on Friday nights which OMcC and OK has set up with Cahoot. The University Chancellor might join as host for the next one.

This is Mental Health Awareness Week and we are promoting it online.

We have supported a delegation for Students' Liberation Conference and at NUS/USI National Congress.

We have been nominated for awards for our work on period poverty, environmental and sustainability action, and post-graduate champion of the year. We will find out tonight if we have won.

OMcC organised a whole day of Zoom Drop-Ins for our members last week.

Sport and Wellbeing Annual Colours Awards were shown on-line through Facebook and was very well done by CCh.

SEA Awards were also held on Zoom to celebrate the work of Societies and engaged students.

We are organising our hand-over to the new Student Executive.

AW asked if the SU has seen good engagement with students during lock-down and AMcA replied there had not been a busier period and we had to find a way to manage all of the queries, which we have done well and answered queries across Societies, Welfare and Academic Affairs. We are keeping close contact with our membership. AW stressed the importance of continuing to recognise achievements to move into the next semester and beyond. It shows strong commitment. He complimented the Student Executive team on their success. KW also thanked AMcA saying it was a

<p>very good period for himself and the team and commented that things have arisen from lock-down that have worked so well which ought to be kept. AMcA agreed there is a re-focusing exercise of the learning to take forward into next year, especially about digital communication.</p>		
<p><b>Agenda Item 8: Chief Executive Officer's Update:</b> DL commended the staff, Officers and representatives on a tremendous effort in a very stoic process which was a testament to leaders and managers in the organisation.</p> <p>There have been structural changes in the University. NL, who was our liaison point, has taken on an amended role to focus on delivery of the new Belfast Campus project. In light of that, PB who has become interim Vice Chancellor has appointed two interim Dean roles. CT will be our contact for next year which gives us huge opportunity as CT is a tremendous supporter of the Student Experience and of academic and wider needs being met and we should embed a strong relationship.</p> <p>The University reported to a Stormont Committee the potential losses that Covid-19 has created, which in a worst case could be substantial. Therefore, they are looking for proposals from every department as to how they can deliver savings. We see this as quite an impossibility, given the additional funding that was given to us 3 years ago was built into additional resources. We have replied with a complex paper and a break-down of our budget, and the cause and effect as well as impact of any reduction. Students need more support now, not less. Our planning is that we build our budgets around a stand-still position, and anything else is a bonus. If the University makes us deliver savings, we may need Trustees support in highlighting the difficulties of this.</p> <p>CCh has been developing a student podcast which the Board can listen to through Apple or Spotify and it is going from strength to strength and will be more important to students over the next 6-9 months. This is an example of one Officer having an idea, taking it to fruition and seeing it grow. All shows take a different stance in advice and guidance, with Student Officers as guest presenters.</p>		
<p><b>Agenda Item 9: Covid-19 Update – Response/Future Steps:</b> DL advised that although AMcA had covered the response in his report, there are steps we are considering over the summer to grasp future impacts. We need to understand what the future will look like and formulate an action plan. Return to campus is going to bring some changes that need to be made, to follow social distancing advice, and phasing or blending working from home to return to campus may need to be considered. Jordanstown has an archaic layout which makes it difficult to social distance everywhere, so PPE could perhaps be made available. We can re-deploy staff resources over the summer considering the potential that people can work outside of their Job Description and pick up on some things that are on our wider To Do Lists. The important one is making sure we don't lose all the benefit and engagement that we have</p>		

<p>had over the last 3-4 months. It is highly likely that Welcome events won't resonate in the usual way so we must make sure students keep in touch with us and get involved in our events, both new students and those returning, in slightly different ways. We must consider income limitations as there is a high likelihood of partnership opportunities being reduced. There is a £15,500,000 charities pot ring-fenced and we are waiting with other Charities to see if this is available to us for funding support. Staff should have clarity on what the future looks like and we can work on a timeline on a gradual return to work and where we are committing ourselves based on updated Government advice. Our health and safety requirements are that staff members can self-certify as part of working from home conditions, so we are showing flexibility, and staff are also being flexible. If this goes on for months, we are going to have to build on what we have so far with more formal mechanisms to make sure that they are looking after themselves. AMcA thanked DL for his report. AW added that an unprecedented number of students engaging is a good indicator and it is good that there is a team in place to provide help in these circumstances, but you cannot make the assumption that every student knows about the SU. He asked, on redeploying staff in the summer months, if there is an opportunity to furlough up until October. DL advised that we had looked at furlough, but only areas that are self-sustaining are suitable within the policy framework set out. Where staff salaries are funded through the University block grant, we felt if and when audited, we would be asked to pay the money back. All Commercial Services staff are on furlough because they fund themselves. AW asked on sector insight if there were any other SU's in similar situations that we could learn from. AMcA replied that the Higher Education sector has been badly affected. There is uncertainty over learning and teaching next year. CC attended a meeting last week which painted a stark picture of the impacts of this crisis on the sector. AW felt that everything that we have done can be held up as good practice. AN wondered whether small adjustments could be made such as staff members call and collect their chairs etc if it looks like this is going to be long-term? There is a small allowance available for working from home which is £6 this year and staff can claim. This is to contribute towards additional costs of working from home. DL said that staff get a monthly payment of £15 for using their mobile phones etc. during the lockdown and agreed that AN's point about chairs is a good one. He added that students not being on campus gives us unique challenges but there is rise in academic representation and engaging in social events, so we could perhaps follow up with a campaign around this. We need a hook to pull people along and AH specialises in this. Long term financial viability is a concern and it may be necessary to have a decision-making capacity on securing this before the Board meets next.</p>	<p>DL to flag the tax relief scheme and give clarity to staff.</p> <p>Board to meet to discuss long term security.</p>	
<p><b>Agenda Item 10: Management Accounts/Budgets 20-21:</b> CK presented the accounts and budget narrative but added that new information means these are still live and changeable. She explained there were 2 parts to the budgets being the years 2019/20 and 2020/21. Sick leave payments and Commercial Services having a tough year left us £40,000 adrift of budget in 19/20. Admin Salaries included a HR process for 19-20 also causing a variance. However, not as many student staff were</p>		

<p>employed and the Advice post was not filled until later in the year. The £22,000 deficit for the year meant that the £132,000 reserves were reduced to a £110,000 balance. She advised that the 2020/21 figures have to be revised, and a significant conversation had in relation to them. The block grant is the same with no increase. Marketing income is down, giving a break-even position of £1,200. These figures are going to change substantially as more information becomes available. AMcA advised that it is quite clear from the deficit for this year that we would have been sitting on £11,000 of a surplus if it had not been for losses in the trading outlets and this was exacerbated by Covid-19. AW felt a better understanding of scenarios was required and a good sense of the size and extent in being creative and vicious on the loss of marketing income through Freshers Fayres. He asked if there was a chance of sponsorship for the podcast. CCh replied that we have looked at this for the next academic year, developed a sponsorship package and are currently looking at potential agencies but have had no response as yet. AW suggested approaching all marketing opportunities and platforms. DL said that we have a wider media pack that needs to be defined and we need to find a balance between not selling ourselves out and bringing in money. He suggested a welcome monthly advent calendar with sponsors advertising their wares. There is something to be done around Freshers Fayres as people could be got together in the same virtual room. AMcA thanked CK for the budgets.</p>		
<p><b>Agenda Item 11: Health &amp; Safety Update:</b> DL advised that this group meets every 6 months to ensure we meet our compliance requirements. The last Audit and Compliance meeting to which this would be reported was cancelled as we had just gone into lock-down when it was due to be held, so we are bringing this to the Board. AN said that a decision was taken on a Wellbeing Survey but with staff in isolation, if we don't intend running that we could possible do something that is Covid-19 remote working related? DL said that we will do something in the interim.</p>	<p>CC and DL to discuss short wellbeing survey.</p>	
<p><b>Agenda Item 12: Risk Register:</b> DL presented the updated Risk Register and reminded that the Board felt it would be useful to know what had changed so the yellow highlighted areas showed the changes primarily built around the Covid-19 situation and major risk around maintaining income levels and wider economic environment. He explained that a major role of SMT for the forthcoming year would be to look at grants and funding pots to see if we can bring more money into the organisation. AN suggested that it was good practice to weave Covid-19 Risk into the register rather than just have it as a standalone which we had done well.</p>		
<p><b>Agenda Item 13: Sub-Committees:</b> DL presented his proposal and advised that we have evolved as a team at Board level. There has become a reduction in what is reported into Sub-Committees, the main concern being repetition of information for Trustees. He wanted to consider whether our current blend of Sub-Committees have struck the right balance. There is little point in taking items to Finance &amp; General Purposes for the sake of following process, then re-presenting it to the Board. Staffing</p>		

needs more of a purpose. Audit & Compliance needed its brief slightly increased. The alternative proposal was the set-up and frequency of Committees of the Board of Trustees to get the correct level of meaningfulness within the organisation. Appointments - invoked for their specific purpose of new Trustees or CEO; Staffing – Still a role for us to have conversations about regrading and discretionary awards and cost of living increases. Audit, Risk and Compliance – focuses on statutory/compliance demands. Temporary Task and Finish Groups – Strategic Planning as an example where External Trustees working with Officers and Senior Staff in shaping the development. These would be time-bound and have a specific purpose. The proposed frequency will be:

- Trustee Board – 4 meetings per year
- Audit, Risk and Compliance – 2 per year
- Staffing – July and when required
- Appointments – When required
- Management Board – 1 per month chaired by the President.

Trustee Board and Audit, Risk and Compliance will have quite a standardised agenda, but we would place the emphasis on Trustees having the ability to offer full scrutiny. Audit, Risk and Compliance would focus on areas that cover compliance, legal and governance, as well as developing business continuity etc which is currently a gap. KW felt comfortable with the restructure of the Committees and the detail of Agendas would go into more key issues that we need to ensure that we capture details on. AN had a slight concern on the level of oversight, which was quite vast for some Committees if we drop a Sub-Committee but felt that Task and Finish Groups will work well. DL advised that the 2<sup>nd</sup> part of the paper deals with expertise. We could drop 30/40-minute Committees and make the meetings more meaningful. The maximum value of meetings is having skill sets in the right area and showing due diligence and the point of expertise requirement that caused concern is covered in the second part of the paper which looks at increasing the external knowledge brought into the organisation. It goes without saying that Officers and Student Trustees are critical to bring in student opinion. However, External Trustees bring built-in experience from industry dealing with the same scenarios that we have. Currently, if one External Trustee can't attend, you are down to 2 so there is a concern of critical mass in the room. Purely to start a discussion, as it is very much a decision for the Trustee Board to make, do we need to look at re-balancing the Board to have a further External Trustee as part of the Board, but a reduced amount of Student Trustees? We have great feedback from Student Officers that sit on the Board on student opinion and there really is a struggle to recruit high quality long term Student Trustees, so we would have better focus and excellent input and they would be available for longer than 6-8 months. This is a suggestion for discussion in terms of re-balance. The President will be Chair for 1-2 years. The External Trustees would increase to 5. We retain 3 further Student Officer Trustees in addition to the President and reduce to 2 Student Trustees. This still means that there will

<p>be a majority of students on the Board. An additional External Trustee would give extra security and alleviate the risk to the organisation. Trustee Board should consider the proposed changes and agree, or suggest alternatives, or retain the status quo. AMcA thought that Task and Finish Groups would be useful also and agreed. After a brief discussion the changes were approved.</p>		
<p><b>Agenda Item 14: Proposed 2020/21 Meetings Schedule:</b> DL presented the schedule and advised that he had put some dates in place ahead of time for proposed meetings but pointed out that the original September training was to be in Belfast and combined with the meeting. Given the circumstance it will most likely now be virtual. CC agreed September to be a good time for 2 additional external Trustees and the new Student Officers to get a good basic understanding of Trustee Board. The September date was agreed by all. DL continued that we had looked at holding a couple of meetings together in person throughout the year one of which would be the last one of the year, and would have an evaluation feel to it to scrutinise ourselves as a Board. This was approved.</p>		
<p><b>Date of Next Meeting:</b> 10 September 2020</p>		