

**Trustee Board Summary Minutes**

Held on Thursday 29th May 2025 at 4.00 p.m. – Belfast: BA\_02\_012, Coleraine: H113A, and Magee: MD008A and Microsoft Teams

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| **Present:** | **In Attendance:** |
| Ethan Davies, President (ED)Antoinette Bradley, Lay Trustee (Chair) (AB)Emily Roberts, Vice President, Education (ER)Christopher Murray, Vice President Coleraine (CM)Eoin Millar, Student Trustee (EM)Ashley Neill, Lay Trustee (AN)Andrea Probets, Lay Trustee (AP)Darren Fowler, Lay Trustee (DF)Cohen Taylor, Student Trustee (CT) | David Longstaff, Chief Executive Officer (CEO)Clodagh Kennedy, Director of Finance & Business Support (CK)Colin Campbell, Director of HR & Campus Operations (CC)Favour Okpohs, Vice President Belfast (FO)Daniel Sanusi, Vice President Equality and Belonging (DS)Conor O’Hagan, Vice President Sport and Wellbeing (CH) |
| **Apologies:** |  |
| Reece Armstrong, Vice President Magee (RA) |  |
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| **Meeting notes** | **Action** | **Update** |
| **Agenda Item 1- Welcome**The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.  |  |  |
| **Agenda Item 2- Apologies/Quorum Count**The Vice President Magee sent his apologies. The Chair noted that the Vice President Education, Student Trustee and External Trustee were running late. The Vice President Education joined at 16.06 and External Trustee joined at 16:12.  |  |  |
| **Agenda Item 3- Declaration of Interest**The Chair mentioned that he had one declaration of interest regarding a birthday leave policy for UUSU which he would mention at Agenda Item 11.  |  |  |
| **Agenda Item 4- Minutes of last meeting**The minutes of the meeting on 3rd April 2025 were approved.  |  |  |
| **Agenda Item 5- Matters arising**There were no matters arising. |  |  |
| **Agenda Item 6- Chairperson’s Remarks**The Vice President Equality and Belonging joined the meeting. The Chair mentioned the proposal for an increase in tuition fees. NUS-USI were able to successfully stop this campaign and tuition fees will not be increasing this year. This has altered UU’s financial plans for this year. There may be cuts depending on whether UU can find an alternative to their funding model. The Chair also noted that the Riverside Theatre will be closing in August. The Chair wished to highlight this to the Board. The Chair discussed with the VC the funding models with the Higher and Further Education Colleges and whether this will have a significant impact on UUSU’s finances this year. This year is uncertain but the Chair imagines that approval for special projects such as the SU Awards or the LTAs will be greatly curtailed. The Chair referred to the successful Student’s Union Award ceremony in Ireland where the Vice President Education, Vice President Magee, LD and CHR won awards. The LTA’s are taking place tomorrow.Discussions are ongoing regarding the Officer’s roles and remits particularly whether the VP Sport and Wellbeing role will shift into a more focused sports role or if the role will change entirely. No questions. |  |  |
| **Agenda Item 7- Chief Executive Officer’s Report**The CEO referred to the Bilingual Signage Debate which was reported recently in the press. UUSU now adopts a Trilingual Policy. UUSU made a strategic decision not to comment any further on the issue as it is often directed towards a Bilingual approach that doesn’t line with UUSU’s Policy, and UUSU is limited in what it can say until appointments are made within the Office of Identity and Cultural Expression. The CEO wished to flag this to the Board in case of additional media coverage.The operational targets continue to be pushed forward. The Senior Staff Forum is almost over the line. Representations have been made to the University and the Chair has presented to the VC. The CEO is hopeful that the first meeting will take place in semester one. This should hopefully take the pressure off the President during their one-to-one meetings with the VC and give UUSU another forum to raise some of the operational issues.In terms of challenges the CEO referred to the student fee increase, and the risk factor identified by the Chair. The Economy Minister said that there would be some additional emergency funding for this year, but the amount is not yet clear, as well as how this will be covered in future years. This will need to be kept under close review. The Vice President of Education is working on the Officer induction process and is focusing on building relationships/team bonding. The new Officers have been invited to the Trustee Board meeting next month.External Trustee asked if there is anything the Board can do in terms of Sports, to avoid going into a second year of not being sure of the guidelines which could put UUSU into a difficult position from a reputational perspective. The CEO said that the Director of Business Support and Finance has appended this to her report. No further questions. |  |  |
| **Agenda Item 8- Director of Finance & Business Support’s Report**The Director of Finance & Business Support referred to her reports which cover the Management Accounts as at 30th April and the budgets for the incoming financial year starting 1st August. The Director of Finance & Business Support focused on the paper titled 25/26 Budget TB. As at the 30th April UUSU’s income was £1,619,000. Expenditure was 1,526,000. There is a substantial surplus of £92,000. Projected outturn for the rest of the year until July and a projected surplus of £159,000. The reasons for this surplus are the vacant Director’s position, the two positions budgeted to start in August didn’t start until September and UUSU didn’t have as many student staff this year. This meant that there were savings in the payroll costs which were budgeted at £1,592,000. Costs were approx. £1,469,000. There has also been less spending across departments. The Marketing Manager is to help with spending before the end of year in terms of resources/lanyards/general promotion material etc.As at April there are reserves in the balance sheet of £770,000.External Trustee referred to £10,000 being allocated to repairs and renewals, and the expenditure of £719 and asked if this was down to the drop in footfall. The Director of Finance & Business Support said that this was a mistake on her part. The £3,000 figure was due to painting happening at Magee. The Director of HR and Campus Operations asked if we have been invoiced for this. The Director of Finance and Business Support responded no, with the Director of HR and Campus Operations agreeing to chase this up.External Trustee asked what a reasonable carryover of funds would be. The Director of Finance & Business Support said that there isn’t a particular figure. This is a one off for UUSU. External Trustee said Board would be content for the Senior Team to spend some of the money before the end of the year, where useful, to include any maintenance that may have been planned for next year. The Chair mentioned upgrading Officers’ laptops. The Director of Finance & Business Support said that the laptops were bought in Autumn 23, and the replacement schedule was already brought forward this year. The Director of Finance & Business Support referred to the budgets for next year 25/26. Admin, salaries and wages are the most significant change in budget for the current year. There is an increase in Employers National Insurance of £30,000. There are some increments and general costs. 2% has been applied to UUSU Sport. The rest of the costs are pretty much the same with a slight reduction in voice, activities and marketing. Next year UUSU predicts a surplus of £6,000. The Budget was approved. The Vice President Education left the meeting. No further questions. |  |  |
| **Agenda Item 9 -Director of Human Resources & Campus Operation’s Report** 108 applications were received for the Director position. 26 applicants were invited to first stage interviews with 6 candidates for interview on Monday 2nd June.The Responsible Futures Working Group is to meet on 17th June to discuss recommendations for UUSU.The Director of HR and Campus Operations referred to the guidance from the University regarding Teams’ recordings and minutes and GDPR compliance. A change of format to a shortened version of minutes was discussed. It was agreed to change to the new shortened format on the basis that if anyone feels strongly about something they should let it be known that they wish to have it captured in the minutes or if there is a particular area of contention for further details to be recorded. This can be added to the training session on 26th June. The new minutes were approved.  |  |  |
| **Agenda Item 10- Staff Survey**The CEO referred to the staff survey presentation. 23 responses were received. The CEO gave an overview of the survey format and the aggregated responses to the questions. The CEO discussed the key takeaways from the survey results to include a review of the Performance and Development Policy, the need for regular feedback, and to improve the perception that there are different standards expected of one person than another. In addition the need to upskill staff and invest in staff, and to better understand comments around managing change. There is room for development for the organisation to be open, honest and to share information effectively. The CEO hopes that the new Director will assist with this.The CEO mentioned the positive topics (colleagues, employee wellbeing, engagement, equality, diversity and inclusion, management, role, service and values). The highest rated questions were also discussed. A focus group will be created with the aim of improving the lowest scoring areas. The first meeting will look at a deep dive of the survey, the second will consider views on how staff feel the organisation can develop with SMT taking a sense check and the third meeting will then refine that. The plan is to meet over the summer with a view to presenting an action plan to Board in and around September/October, with the action plan running for the next 18 months until the survey is retaken in 2027 to measure change. We will update on progress twice a year at each staff meeting. We can flag any areas of concern with the Board. One of the areas we might not have the tools or ability to make progress is across reward as don’t have the resources to just pay people more. We intend on doing the survey every 2 years.External Trustee asked the CEO if there was anything that surprised him from the results and in relation to the focus group how he plans to get the right balance of people. The CEO said that it was a consultative exercise. The Director of HR and Campus Operations is the SMT representative, and the HR Advisor will be the HR lead. A rep will be elected from each of the four component areas who can discuss with their own cohort and feedback at the next meeting. The CEO was surprised at the response re not managing change effectively given the change in Officers each year, campus/Covid etc. The CEO wants to know from staff if it is the planning, the preparation or the execution so that they can do it better in the future given that UUSU is always going through change.It was agreed that a bespoke survey would be done for the Officers in the years that UUSU doesn’t do a main survey. No further questions.  |  |  |
| **Agenda Item 11- Any Other Business**The Chair asked the Boards opinion on staff birthday leave. External Trustees agreed that the best approach is to give an additional day of leave. It was agreed that the Chair will take this back to SMT and discuss how to bring this back to the Board at the next meeting. The Chair confirmed at the next Trustee Board meeting the annual leave policy will be presented.  |  |  |
| **Agenda Item 12- Date of next meeting/Close of meeting**The date of the next meeting was not confirmed during the meeting- it is 26th June but will be focused on annual Board training.  |  |  |