

University Executive Board

Minutes

05 November 2025

Present: Professor Jane Norman (Vice-Chancellor, Chair), Professor Sam Kingman (Deputy Vice-Chancellor), Professor Sube Banerjee (FPVC MHS), Jason Carter (Chief Governance and Risk Officer), Kylie Colvin (Interim Chief Strategy Officer), Professor Jeremy Gregory (FPVC Arts and FPVC Social Sciences), Professor Katherine Linehan (PVC ESE), Professor Zoe Wilson (FPVC Science), Chris Hunt (Chief Operations Officer), Professor Tom Rodden (PVC RKE), Helen McNamara (Chief People Officer), Professor Chris Tuck (FPVC Engineering),

Apologies: Matt Atkinson

In Attendance: Emily Murtha (Secretary), Louella Houldcroft (Director of Communication and Advocacy), Paul Steeples (Director of Finance Strategy) for minute 25.172, Kev Thompson (Director of Governance and Assurance) for minute 25.172 and 25.173, Pete Buckley (Deputy Director of HR) for minute 25.172 and 25.173, Vicky Clarke (Deputy Director of Communications) for minute 25.172, Daniel Thompson (Operational Resilience Manager) for minute 25.172

25.167 Welcome, Quoracy and Declarations of Interest

The Secretary confirmed that the meeting was quorate. There were no declarations of conflict of interest.

25.168 Minutes of the Meeting held 23 September, 03 October, and 07 October and Action Log

1. UEB APPROVED the minutes of the meeting held on 23 September, 03 October, and 07 October (UEB/25/132, UEB/25/133, UEB/25/134).
2. The Action Log was NOTED.
 1. UEB noted outstanding action 25.135.3 and requested that an updated paper on the principles and criteria for the Senior Leaders' Group be submitted to a future UEB meeting.

ACTION		OWNER	DUE DATE
05/11/2025 25.168.1	Present a paper on the principles and criteria for the Senior Leaders Group to UEB	Director of Communication and Advocacy	Jan-26

25.169 Chair's Business

1. The Chair reported that, following yesterday's CFO interviews, an offer had been made to the preferred candidate and verbally accepted
2. UEB agreed that a formal plan is required to cover the period between the interim CFO's departure and the new CFO's arrival. The VC, DVC and COO will work with the interim CFO to develop this.

ACTION		OWNER	DUE DATE
05/11/2025 25.169.1	Develop a continuity plan for the finance function covering the period between the interim CFO's departure and the new CFO's commencement.	VC, DVC, COO, CFO	Nov-26

25.170 Strategy Alignment to DFE White Paper

1. The Chief Strategy Officer presented slides outlining the key elements of the recently published Post-16 Education White Paper from the Department for Education. Key discussion points were:
 1. UEB NOTED the White Paper's strong focus on skills and the potential risks to financial sustainability, highlighting the need to secure core funding streams.
 2. Skills pathways and modular adult learning were noted as strong opportunities for the University, offering strategic benefits for branding and student recruitment.
 3. UEB NOTED the need to agree clear priorities across areas such as CPD, executive education, online provision, skills, and the lifelong learning entitlement.
 4. UEB DISCUSSED opportunities to strengthen relationships with high-profile partners, such as Rolls-Royce and Boots, through the development of tailored curriculum offerings. It was noted that while bespoke provision may be appropriate for major partners, a 'build once, roll out' model could support a scalable standard offer for broader use.
 5. UEB NOTED that the CPD space will be highly competitive, with margins reducing quickly, and emphasised the need for robust business cases demonstrating long-term profitability
 6. UEB NOTED the need for a dedicated team to focus this work, recognising that the required resource already exists across the University but needs coordination, and agreed that the approach must clearly demonstrate institutional benefit.

25.171 Financial Update

1. UEB Received a financial update from the Director of Financial Management. Key point included:
 1. UEB noted that the slotting process for suitable alternative roles is now complete. Until this work is fully finalised, a complete view of departmental pay structures is not yet available.
 2. UEB noted that DTS Product and the UniCore team are progressing the required system changes to enable reporting on the new structure.
 3. It was noted that the contingency has been called upon, with around £3m required for student recruitment (as agreed at the UEB Away Day), partly offset by additional tuition fee income.
 4. Headline performance for the first two months is slightly better than budget, driven by strategic funds investment.
 5. It was noted that the pay forecast will need to be reworked following recent establishment work, and that the main pressures continue to sit within non-pay budgets.
 6. The tariff impact has resulted in an additional £6m from student over-delivery. The budget assumed a tariff impact that has not materialised, and this will need to be revisited.

25.172 Industrial Action

1. UEB RECEIVED a presentation from the Director of Governance and Assurance, Deputy Director of Communications, Deputy Director of HR and the Operational Resilience Manager. The following key points were discussed:

1. It was NOTED that further mitigation plans are now required. As staff are not obliged to declare participation in strike action, planning remains challenging. The University is following UUK and OfS guidance and is acting consistently with sector practice
2. UEB NOTED the following high-level risks arising from industrial action: educational impact; student experience; marking and assessment; potential student compensation; action short of strike; and reputational risk.
3. UEB DISCUSSED the challenges in accurately recording the impact of strike action and noted the need for improved data and clearer expectations to support future planning and any potential mitigation.
4. UEB DISCUSSED the impact on marking and assessment, noting the need to prioritise teaching and assessment activity, ensure marks are submitted ahead of contingency points, and acknowledge the complexity of providing alternative teaching arrangements
5. UEB NOTED that the University has scope to determine its compensation approach and that work will be required to assess affected modules and the associated compensation implications
6. UEB discussed the current 50% pay deduction applied for action short of strike and agreed that this policy should be reviewed
7. UEB AGREED that dedicated Head of School meetings are required to support effective communication on industrial action
8. UEB DISCUSSED the option of investing in a bank of hourly paid lecturers to mitigate the impact of industrial action and AGREED that this should be explored further

ACTION		OWNER	DUE DATE
05/11/2025 25.173.1	Review the current 50% pay deduction policy for action short of strike and propose any recommended changes.	Deputy Director of HR	Dec-25

25.173 Accountability Framework

1. UEB RECIEVED paper UEB/25/135 outline the revised accountability framework for approval and DISCUSSED the following:
 1. UEB DISCUSSED the need for stronger accountability in the new committee structure, with chairs expected to intervene and adjust membership where it is not functioning effectively.
 2. UEB NOTED that the committee structure cannot be relied upon for all activity and that members must work collectively and proactively outside formal committees to drive progress
 3. UEB discussed the need to clarify roles and address blurred lines of accountability, emphasising shared responsibility, constructive challenge, and clear ways of working across portfolios and support functions
 4. UEB DISCUSSED the accountability expectations of APVCs in relation to academic performance, noting the need to remove passive language and grey areas to ensure clear responsibility. It was agreed that the FPVC for Engineering would provide draft wording for the APVC accountability statement
 5. UEB APPROVED the Accountability Framework, subject to members providing any final feedback following circulation.

ACTION		OWNER	DUE DATE
05/11/2025 25.174.1	Provide draft wording for the APVC accountability statement to the Director of Governance and Assurance	FPVC Engineering	Dec-25

ACTION	OWNER	DUE DATE
05/11/2025 25.174.2	Circulate the Accountability Framework to UEB for feedback Secretary	Nov-25

25.174 Institutional Neutrality Policy

1. UEB RECEIVED paper UEB/25/140 outlining the new Institutional Neutrality Policy to review and comment. Key Points included:
 1. UEB NOTED that universities are often asked to comment on global or political events, and that the proposed policy aims to establish an institutional position of neutrality. This would not restrict academic freedom or individual freedom of speech
 2. UEB DISCUSSED the need to make explicit that academics speak in a personal or academic capacity, not on behalf of the University, when commenting publicly or in the media
 3. UEB expressed strong support for the proposed policy, noting that it largely crystallises the University's existing position rather than introducing a new approach
 4. UEB AGREED that the policy should now be submitted to Council for noting.

ACTION	OWNER	DUE DATE
05/11/2025 25.175.1	Submit the proposed neutrality policy to Council for noting. Chief Governance and Risk Officer	Mar-26

25.175 Internal Audit Annual Opinion

1. UEB NOTED paper UEB/25/137 on the Internal Audit Annual Opinion. The item was not discussed but was noted as presented

25.176 Gillies Audit Review

1. UEB NOTED paper UEB/25/138 on the Gillies Audit Review. The item was not discussed but was noted as presented

25.177 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

1. UEB NOTED paper UEB/25/139, the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy, which had been approved by the People and Culture Committee. As a starred item, it was received for noting without discussion.

25.178 Any Other Business

1. UEB APPROVED the extract of the minutes from the Away Day (15–16 October) relating to the rapid-fire decision session, with the exception of the action concerning the Farm. It was agreed that the PVC RKE would revise this action and return it to UEB for approval.

ACTION	OWNER	DUE DATE
05/11/2025 25.180.1	Revise the FARM-related action from the Away Day minutes and resubmit it to UEB for approval PVC RKE	Dec-26