

University Executive Board

Minutes

06 January 2026

Present: Professor Jane Norman (Vice-Chancellor, Chair), Professor Sube Banerjee (FPVC MHS), Jason Carter (Chief Governance and Risk 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), Professor Sam Kingman (Deputy Vice-Chancellor), Kylie Colvin (Interim Chief Strategy Officer)

Apologies: None

In Attendance: Emily Murtha (Secretary), Sally Blackamore (Director of Finance), Pauline Maden (Direct of education and Student Experience, Quality and Standards for minute 26.05, Chris Hulse (Academic Registrar) for minute 26.06, Taidhgh O'Regan (Product Director) for minute 26.06, Gemma Smith (Director of Student Recruitment) for minute 26.10, Rory Morgan (Organisational Development Manager) for minute 26.07, Kate Pritchard (People Insight) for minute 26.07

26.01 Welcome, Quoracy and Declarations of Interest

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

26.02 Minutes of the Meeting held 05 November, 02 December, e-Circulation on 09 December and Action Log

1. UEB APPROVED the minutes of the **meeting held 05 November, 02 December and e-Circulation on 09 December** (UEB/26/01)
2. The Action Log was NOTED, and the following updates were provided:
 - 25.180.1 – Revise the FARM-related action from the Away Day minutes and resubmit it to UEB for approval
 1. UEB NOTED that work is underway to consolidate the findings from multiple farm reviews undertaken over the past 18 months into a paper outlining proposals for the future of the farm, which will be circulated for comment ahead of submission of a final paper to UEB.

ACTION	OWNER	DUE DATE
06/01/2026 26.02.1 Liaise with the Secretary to agree a timeline for the development and circulation (for comment) of an initial paper setting out options for the future of the farm, and for the subsequent submission of a final paper to UEB for decision.	PVC RKE	Feb-26

25.173.1 – Review the current 50% pay deduction policy for action short of strike and propose any recommended changes

1. UEB **NOTED** that the review of the current 50% pay deduction policy for action short of strike has been completed and that the outcome of the review is to retain the existing 50% reduction.

26.03 Matters Arising from the Previous Meeting

1. UEB NOTED that, at the previous meeting, members had agreed to share their individual objectives with the Secretary for circulation to UEB. The Chair noted that some objectives had been received and encouraged remaining members to submit theirs, advising that HR support was available to assist if required.

26.04 Chairs Brief

1. UEB **NOTED** that the newly established UEB committees will provide periodic reports to UEB on a rolling basis using the agreed reporting template, and that a paper will be brought to UEB setting out the proposed reporting content and reporting cycle.
2. **UEB NOTED** that, going forward, a summary of UEB minutes will be produced for publication to all staff, commencing with the minutes from this meeting.
3. **UEB NOTED** that, going forward, the Governance team will apply paper deadlines more strictly, and that any papers not received by the deadline will be deferred to the agenda of the next meeting.
4. **UEB DISCUSSED** the need to clarify the appropriate governance routes for items with financial implications. It was noted that, once the new CFO is in post, the Chief Governance and Risk Officer will consider the requirement for establishing a Finance Committee.
5. **UEB DISCUSSED** the importance of clearly demonstrating governance pathways for different categories of business, noting the need to avoid the same paper being required to progress through multiple committees unnecessarily.
6. UEB NOTED inconsistencies between the current Scheme of Financial Delegation and the emerging committee structure, and that the Director of Governance and Assurance is working on alignment
7. UEB NOTED the sensitivities associated with Council approval of the Scheme of Financial Delegation and the perception of increasing financial delegated authority in the current financial climate.

ACTION	OWNER	DUE DATE
06/01/2026 26.04.1	Submit a paper to UEB outlining the proposed reporting content and reporting cycle for UEB committees	Chief Governance and Risk Officer Feb-26
06/01/2026 26.04.2	Submit a summary of UEB minutes to the communications team for publication following each meeting	Secretary Feb-26

26.05 Access and Participation Plan Review

1. UEB RECEIVED paper UEB/26/03 providing an overview of financial investment in APP, including benchmarking, potential savings options, associated OfS variation risks, and progress to date. Key discussion point included:

1. UEB NOTED the uncertainty regarding the position of APP within the new TEF regime, and that taking a decision at this stage could negatively impact TEF outcomes
2. UEB NOTED that APP performance is highly organisation-specific, reflecting student demographics, which makes direct comparisons difficult
3. UEB NOTED that the APP spend profile was submitted two years ago, but the plan only came into effect in August 2025.
4. UEB DISCUSSED bursaries and agreed clarity is needed on whether alumni-funded bursaries are included in the APP investment figure.
5. UEB AGREED in principle to reduce the overall APP investment, with a relatively high-risk appetite, but did not agree any specific changes at this stage and requested further work to set out how the proposed reduction would be delivered
6. UEB AGREED that a further paper would be developed focusing on reducing bursary spend

ACTION	OWNER	DUE DATE
06/01/2026 26.05.1	Provide a clear breakdown of which bursaries are included in the APP investment figure, including whether alumni-funded bursaries are counted.	PVC, ESE Feb-26
06/01/2026 26.05.2	Develop a paper setting out options for reducing bursary spend	PVC, ESE Feb-26

26.06 Timetabling and Exam Scheduling System Replacement

1. UEB RECEIVED paper UEB/26/04, outlining Business Case Two for the Teaching and Examinations Scheduling Solution (TESS), seeking approval to increase funding from £1.7M to £3.2M to complete system replacement and integration, alongside approval of the proposed funding model, budget carry-forward to 2028, and ongoing run costs Key point included:
 1. UEB NOTED that the current system is end-of-life and must be replaced, and that the initial business case was approved by the Planning and Resources Committee in 2025, authorising implementation to begin before full costs were known
 2. UEB NOTED that the additional costs are not currently built into the financial plan
 3. UEB NOTED that costs are based on a prudent worst-case estimate to ensure budget availability, that some integration requirements will only be confirmed through further discovery work due to process complexity, and that data cleansing during implementation will help streamline processes and support future efficiencies
 4. UEB DISCUSSED staffing requirements, including three proposed new posts, noting the intention to fill these from existing staff to remain cost neutral, and their role in enabling efficiencies through system functionality (e.g. automated scheduling) supported by a central product and project team.



5. UEB NOTED concern that the forecast risk rating at project end remains at 9, and agreed that future business cases must be supported by a more developed and robust risk register when seeking investment.
6. UEB APPROVED the uplift of the existing £1.7m PRC strategic funding amount to £3.2m
7. UEB APPROVED the Flexibility to carry-forward revenue/capital underspends between financial years up to January 2028.
8. UEB APPROVED the commitment to fund c£350k revenue consequences in outer years yielding an overall cost envelope of £3.9m to build and run the solution for an initial 5-year period and NOTED that Work will be undertaken during the lifetime of project to identify a cost-neutral approach which funds this activity from existing operating expenditure
9. UEB APPROVED the adoption of the Continued Investment Gateway Approach
10. UEB NOTED the long-term operational commitment beyond implementation

26.07 People and Culture 2025 Survey Results

1. UEB RECEIVED and NOTED paper UEB/26/06 outlining the results from the 2025 People and Culture Survey. Key discussion point included:
 1. UEB NOTED that draft high-level communications for Unions and Council are in place, that work will take place with the Communications team to ensure headlines do not override context, and that a paper on the survey results will go to Council in March.
 2. UEB DISCUSSED the approach to cascading communications, including the balance between sharing headline messages first with more detail to follow versus issuing all information at once, and the need to both meet commitments on timing and ensure senior leaders have time to digest the results and align on a consistent collective message
 3. UEB AGREED that an updated People and Culture survey communications plan would be circulated to UEB for approval.