

Minutes marked Commercial in confidence or confidential have been redacted from the web version

UNIVERSITY OF KENT

Minutes of the Meeting held on 28 November 2025 Hybrid Meeting held at Darwin Boardroom, Canterbury Campus and via MS Teams

Present: The Chair of Council, Mark Preston; The Deputy Chair of Council and Chair of Finance & Resources Committee, Andrew Newell; The Acting Vice-Chancellor and President, Professor Georgina Randsley de Moura; Lay members: Paul Pugh; Julie Kelly; Jonathan Steel; Nick Ratcliffe; Philip Jordan; Carolyn Morgan; Kim Lowe. President Kent Students' Union, Himadri; Vice President Education, Cláudia Moreira; Elected Student Representative, Daniel Cope. Acting Deputy Vice Chancellor Strategy and Performance (S&P), Professor Claire Peppiatt-Wildman; Academic Staff Representatives, Dr Balihar Sanghera, Professor Shujun Li; Non-Academic Staff Representatives, Jahanara Ahmed, Dr Daniel Knox.

In attendance: Director of Finance , Frank Richardson; Chief Operations Officer, John Duffy; Transformation Director, Glynn Thomas; Integration Director, Peter Pentecost (item 12); Interim University Secretary and Director of Governance & Assurance, Dr Jo Wright; Deputy University Secretary, Sarah Megson; Governance Support Officer, Jamie Cox; Governance Manager, Lanre Folarin (Secretary).

Apologies: Lay Member, Thomas Hyner.

6090 CHAIR'S INTRODUCTION

The Chair noted apologies and the implication on quoracy, and welcomed members and attendees to the meeting.

At this point, the meeting was adjourned and reconvened due to quoracy to consider the items for note and approval (as per Council Standing Order 3(x)(c)).

Council members were reminded of their duties as trustees.

A few members declared membership of USS. No other interests or conflicts of interest were declared.

6091 MINUTES

Council approved paper **C2025/022**, Minutes of the Meeting held on 3 October 2025.

6092 MATTERS ARISING

Council noted the updates from the Action Log, **C2025/023** and agreed to close the recommended items.

Reserved Business (confidential to Council) considered.

6093 ACTING VICE-CHANCELLOR AND PRESIDENT'S COMMUNICATIONS

The Acting Vice-Chancellor welcomed everyone to the new term and presented the following updates:

External Matters:

- Headlines of the Autumn Budget for HE:
 - Confirmation of fee levels (pending legislation) for the next two academic years.
 - The return of maintenance grants, which will equate to a maximum grant of £1,000 per year (cash value in 2028–29) for students with household incomes at or below the minimum means-testing threshold (£25,000 per year) and will taper down to a maximum of £500 for students with household incomes at or below £30,000.
 - Changes to national insurance on salary sacrifice arrangements for pensions from 2029, expected to have a substantial impact on university finances.
 - Confirmation of the international student levy, to be set at a flat rate of £925 from August 2028.

Industry response, including UUK's comment on the potential to affect recruitment numbers and WonkHE's comment that measures could reshape the sector's financial future and possibly have some unintended consequences on staff remuneration, students (limited demand for new graduates and likely convergence of student loan repayment thresholds with minimum wage) .

- Funding for the lower Thames Crossing confirmed.
- OfS financial sustainability report that without mitigating actions, 45% of institutions face a deficit in 2025/26 – up from 34% (as at May). It was stated that this was perhaps in part due to a growing public perception that universities lack utility to our students and local communities. Upcoming UUK Reputation Summit will explore how universities can navigate reputational risk.
- The Post-16 Education and Skills White Paper: The first policy framework for HE since 2014 ('Students at the Heart of the System') broadly continues with an instrumental view of education where value is tied to measurable outcomes, rather than students' aspirations. The paper envisions a sector that is more specialised and efficient, more collaborative with FE, more aligned with government priorities, and able to meet tougher regulation on quality. However, policy lever to drive this are weak.
Pending legislations, the challenges faced by the University regarding it's TEF, NSS and Graduate Outcomes were highlighted, as well as the initiatives being

developed for improvement. Other areas of focus would include, specialisation and collaboration, R&D, governance, efficiency, access and participation and growth through upskilling and innovation

- Devolution: Local authorities were required to submit their plans for local government reorganisation in their areas on 28 November. **[minutes confidential to Council]**.

The Acting VC emphasised that the University would need to work through the priority areas highlighted in the Post-18 White Paper as the practical consequences become clearer. **[minutes confidential to Council]**.

It was mentioned that EG had started to look into the budget implications and there was a recent discussion by the Kent and Medway Employment Task Force which stressed the need for better pathways for young people in Kent and Medway. The Acting VC was also set to meet with other HE and FE leaders in Kent.

On whether or not there had been recent government announcements on legal migration, it was stated that there were none, although there was already a decline in international student numbers due to previously announced measures to protect the Graduate Visa Route. On the other hand, the earlier re-entry into the Erasmus was noted as welcome.

6094 STUDENTS' UNION PRESIDENT'S COMMUNICATIONS

The Students' Union President presented the following student voice updates:

- The launch of a new strategy (2025-2028) by Kent Students' Union with a renewed focus on belonging, representation, meaningful change and improved systems.
- Ongoing feedback gathering especially around the Kent/Greenwich partnership and strengthening the use of feedback.
- KSU democracy review, improving student representatives' training, and progressing major student-led projects. As a result, the existing 4 Sabbatical Officer roles will be consolidated into 3 roles with more focused portfolios. Also, KSU will trial a new agile committee structure.
- Wins include expanded events, stronger student representation at University Council, new funding for research on socio-economic experience, increased PGR support, funding and collaboration with the Graduate Research College Board, and installation of 15 free period product dispensers on campus. Medway student membership on KSU Board also noted as a welcome development.
- Ongoing campaigns to address cost of living, teaching quality, wellbeing, inclusion, and student equity. New Events Manager recruited.
- New student voice project exploring how socio-economic background impacts students' studies commenced and showing significant progress, with further

insights being developed through advisory boards reviewing NSS results and student support needs.

- Updates on Sabbatical Officers' campaigns, as well as, Black, LGBTQIA+, International student voice projects and Student Advisory Boards.

In response to a question about how students were feeling about the University, it was stated that student engagement had improved and there were more footfalls at campus outlets, especially on Wednesdays. However, it was noted that engagement with surveys was still low.

6095 STRATEGIC PLAN AND CURRENT PERFORMANCE (KENT 2030)

The Acting Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Strategy and Performance) presented a report on the University's performance against Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), and League table positions **C2025/026**.

[minutes confidential to Council]

Additionally, it was stated that Education Modernisation was now being monitored to ensure accountability and steps were being taken to recruit a Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research, Innovation, and International).

Through discussion, Council noted as follows:

- In view of the challenges with recruitment, it was suggested that driving employability in more ingenious ways might be even more beneficial than advancing artificial intelligence adoption. It was stated that engaging more employers for work experience would be integral. It was confirmed that this was in train with efforts aimed at ensuring that students' development of cross-sectional skills. It was also mentioned that a new Business Development, Research and Innovation Director was now in post to drive this and align the University with the government's skills target.
- The University recently applied for and was granted OfS capital grant funding.
- Along with NSS, PRES and PTRES surveys were being reviewed and action points followed up by Heads of Schools.
- In response to a comment about the KPIs appearing somewhat backward-looking, it was explained that data was collated in August but there is a live data dashboard which is periodically updated in conjunction with UCAS and reviewed regularly internally, with performance monitoring and tracking devolved to Heads of Schools. Council noted the need to not lose sight of the various KPI workstreams in view of the merger.
- That the DVC (S&P) had recently taken on responsibility for UKIC (University of Kent International College) and would be looking into the operations and student experience.

6096 REPORT FROM AUDIT COMMITTEE

The Chair of Audit presented paper **C2025/027** Annual Internal Audit Report for 2024/25 and paper **C2025/028** Corporate Risk Register for note. **[minutes confidential to Council]**

[minutes confidential to Council] It was also explained that the CRR was underpinned by the Risk on a Page (RoaP) documents and the risk scores were derived based on risk impact and issue escalation determinants with EG approval.

Through discussion, Council noted that:

- **[minutes confidential to Council]**.
- **[minutes confidential to Council]**.
- **[minutes confidential to Council]**.
- **[minutes confidential to Council]**.

6097 CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER'S REPORT

The Director of Finance presented the CFO's Report, paper **C2025/029**, inclusive of updates on the Annual Review and Financial Statements 2024/24, Going Concern Assessment, Stakeholder Engagement, etc and the Q1 forecasts. Council was informed that:

- **[minutes confidential to Council]**.
- **[minutes confidential to Council]**.
- **[minutes confidential to Council]**.
- **[minutes confidential to Council]**.
- Postgraduate Placement Fee – changes approved to Kent Business School placement fees for 2026/27.
- **[minutes confidential to Council]**.
- **[minutes confidential to Council]**.
- Financial Authority Limits – A proposal to update these limits to reflect organisational structure changes will be brought to Council in due course.
- Bank Mandate Panel - FRC approved a proposal to establish a Bank Mandate Panel as a control measure **[minutes confidential to Council]**.
- **[minutes confidential to Council]**.
- **[minutes confidential to Council]**.
- **[minutes confidential to Council]**.

Council noted the updates provided including matters to be revisited in due course.

6098 REPORT ON THE UNIVERSITY'S FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 JULY 2025

The Director of Finance presented and Council noted paper **C2025/030**, Draft Financial Performance for the year ended 31 July 2025 against budget (draft management accounts) and paper **C2025/031**, Draft Financial Statements 2024/25 (I&E, cashflow, balance sheet and supporting notes).

[minutes confidential to Council].

[minutes confidential to Council].

[minutes confidential to Council]:

- **[minutes confidential to Council].**
- **[minutes confidential to Council].**
- **[minutes confidential to Council].**
- **[minutes confidential to Council].**

Council was informed that work was ongoing to generate the content for the rest of the annual report (i.e., the Strategic Report, Going Concern Assessment, Statement of Corporate Governance and Internal Control) with stakeholders across the University and to finalise the financial content as indicated in the draft. The finance team continues to liaise with the external auditors on the Going Concern Assessment and other audit recommendations.

Council noted the report on financial performance.

6099 RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE FINANCE AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

The Chair of the Finance and Resources Committee and Director of Finance reported that the Pay Awards (of 1.4% for all staff excluding the Executive Group) had been reviewed and approved by FRC for implementation in December and the Acting VC confirmed that this had been announced to staff. They also presented paper, **C2025/032 [minutes confidential to Council].**

[minutes confidential to Council].

[minutes confidential to Council].

Through discussion, Council noted that:

- **[minutes confidential to Council].**

[minutes confidential to Council].

6100 RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE

The Chair of Council and Interim University Secretary presented, **C2025/033** Recommendation of the Appointment of 3 Candidates (Jason Davies, Nicola Berry and Daniel Mensah) as Lay Members. **[minutes confidential to Council]** As for their committees, it was stated that this would be determined subsequently.

It was noted that there would be need for a comprehensive induction for members joining at this stage as well as clear role differentiation. This was acknowledged by the Interim University Secretary who confirmed that there is a good induction programme in place.

Council **approved** the appointment of Jason Davies, Nicola Berry and Daniel Mensah as Lay Members, **[minutes confidential to Council]**.

6101 CODE OF CONDUCT FOR COUNCIL MEMBERS

The Deputy University Secretary presented paper **C2025-049**, Code of Conduct for Council Members in furtherance of Governance Effectiveness Review recommendations.

Council considered and **approved** the Code of Conduct.

ITEMS BELOW THE LINE

6102 BRUSSELS CAMPUS ACCOUNT CLOSURES

Council **approved** paper **C2025/034**.

6103 MODERN SLAVERY STATEMENT

Council **approved** paper **C2025/035**.

6104 PREVENT DUTY

Council **approved** paper **C2025/036** for submission to the Office for Students.

6105 ANNUAL REPORT ON RESEARCHER DEVELOPMENT CONCORDAT

Council **approved** paper **C2025/037** as recommended by Senate.

6106 ANNUAL STATEMENT ON RESEARCH INTEGRITY

Council **approved** paper **C2025/038**.

6107 STUDENT RECRUITMENT DATA

Council noted paper **C2025/039** as recommended by Senate.

[minutes confidential to Council].

[minutes confidential to Council].

6108 KENT STUDENTS' UNION'S ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 JULY 2025

Council noted paper **C2025/040** as recommended by the Finance and Resources Committee.

6109 AUDIT COMMITTEE MINUTES

Council noted papers **C2025/041** and **C2025/042**, Minutes of the meetings held on 9 October 2025 and 12 November 2025.

6110 STANDING COMMITTEE ON ACADEMIC FREEDOM AND FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION (SCAFFE) MINUTES

Council noted paper **C2025/043**, Minutes of the meeting held on 15 October 2025.

6111 HONORARY DEGREES COMMITTEE REPORT

Council **approved** paper **C2025/044**, the Committee's recommendations at the meeting held on 20 October 2025.

6112 PEOPLE COMMITTEE MINUTES

Council noted paper **C2025/045**, Minutes of the meeting held on 21 October 2025.

6113 FINANCE AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE MINUTES

Council noted paper **C2025/046**, Minutes of the meeting held on 17 October 2025.

6114 SENATE REPORT

Council noted paper **C2025/047**, Report on the meeting held on 5 November 2025.

6115 COUNCIL FORWARD PROGRAMME 2025/26

Council noted paper **C2025/048**.

6116 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- Regarding a request for clarification on the cause of an internet interruption in the University sometime last week, Daniel Knox, Council member and Assistant Director of IT Services explained that the interruption was due to planned upgrade works and a contractor deployed change (which caused a system reboot) leading to around 13minutes interruption. It was confirmed that the interruption was not due to a cyber-attack and that both staff and student have been notified. However, he acknowledged the realness of cyber-security threats and explained how the University mitigates/prevent attacks through additional security support from the national connectivity provider, JISC.
- The Acting VC invited members to participate in the next graduation ceremonies, from 27 July 2026 which is an opportunity to witness one of the best parts of the students' journey.
- The Chair of Council reminded members of the workshop [**minutes confidential to Council**]. The Chair also mentioned that it was the last meeting of the Interim University Secretary whose tenure had come to an end and Council commended and applauded her.

6117 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Council noted the following dates for forthcoming meetings in the academic session 2025/26 holding at the Darwin Boardroom unless otherwise Indicated:

- 18 December 2025 (*MS Teams*)
- 22 January 2026 (*Strategy day*)
- 20 March 2026 (*likely Medway*)
- 22 May 2026

- 26 June 2026

Notes

1. Papers

Copies are available on the Council e-board portal (Diligent Boards) or on request from the Secretary. Approved Minutes and many of the papers are published on the University SharePoint site at <https://livekentac.sharepoint.com/sites/council>.

2. Queries

Any queries should be addressed to Lanre Folarin, Governance Manager (Deputy Secretary to Council and Senate), (email: L.Folarin@kent.ac.uk).