

UNIVERSITY OF KENT

MINUTES OF THE SIXTIETH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE COURT

held on 19 June 2026, 11am to 1pm, via MS Teams

The list of those present at the meeting and submitting their apologies for absence is given in Annex A to these minutes (appended).

520. INTRODUCTION AND WELCOME FROM CHAIR OF THE UNIVERSITY'S COURT

YolanDa Brown OBE DL, Chancellor of the University of Kent, welcomed all those present to the 2026 Annual General Meeting of the University's Court.

The Chancellor asked for any conflicts of interest to be declared and there were none recorded.

Mark Preston, Chair of the Council of the University of Kent shared some opening remarks and notified the Court that the University's 2024/2025 Financial Statements would not be presented due to the upcoming merger with the University of Greenwich and a need to manage the process differently. He explained that with approval from the Office for Students, the Financial Statements would be signed and published after the merger completion date of 1st August 2026.

The Chair of the Council further noted that despite the challenges faced by institutions across the Higher Education sector, the University was moving forward with confidence and that the merger was a proactive step to create a sector-leading new model that would increase the resilience of both universities, maximise their strengths, expand opportunities for their students and staff, and increase their impact across the region.

521. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The Chancellor noted apologies received.

522. MINUTES

The Minutes of the last meeting of Court held on 4 June 2025, **Paper CT2025-01** were noted and approved.

523. MATTERS ARISING

No matters were raised.

524. CONSTITUTION, MEMBERSHIP AND BUSINESS OF THE COURT

The Court noted:

- **Paper: CT2025-02:** Constitution and Membership
- **Paper: CT2025-03:** Current Membership
- **Paper: CT2025-04:** Standing Orders

525. ANNUAL REVIEW FOR 2024/2025

Professor Georgina Randsley de Moura, Acting Vice-Chancellor and President, noted with condolences the passing of a University student during the Meningitis B outbreak in March, and thanked all members of the University community, including the Court, for their support during the period. She noted that University colleagues had worked closely with the Department of Health and Social Care, the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) and other partners to respond at exceptional speed to set up vaccination centres and provide healthcare and pastoral support. The Court was also informed of the ongoing impact of the health incident on recruitment.

a. Presentation of the Annual Review

The Acting Vice-Chancellor presented the Annual Review for 2024/2025 and reflected on the challenges of the UK higher education sector, with increasing financial pressures and evolving expectations from both the public and government.

The Court noted that, with limited increases in tuition fees, geopolitical uncertainty and difficult decisions on spending cuts, competition had intensified across the sector. The southeast in particular suffered from being a 'devolution desert' in need of a place-based higher education strategy.

The Acting VC outlined how the University had responded decisively to the challenges by focussing on creating value, changing lives and strengthening communities. She explained the changes introduced across education, research and innovation, through the Education Modernisation programme aimed at transforming overall student experience by providing a revised curriculum, assessment and feedback systems as well as courses more relevant to contemporary careers. Key areas of improvement included:

- Advance timetables
- Increased employability links within courses
- Enhanced facilities
- Revised Academic School structures
- A restructured academic year

The Court noted that Kent had been shortlisted for University of the Year at the inaugural Academic Employability Awards, in recognition of this work and its commitment to embedding employability within teaching and learning. The Acting VC noted that although it was too early to see the full impact of the Education Modernisation programme, early

student indicators suggested enhanced progression rates and improved attendance and engagement rates.

b. 2024/2025 Financial Overview

Jane Higham, Chief Financial Officer (CFO), provided an update on 2024/2025 finances. Key areas highlighted were:

- A statutory deficit of £5.6m inclusive of some significant one-off items like restructuring costs, loss on capital disposals, impairment and one-off capital grants associated with significant strategic investments to make the University more sustainable.
- An underlying operational financial performance surplus of £0.6m, improved from a prior year deficit of £6.3m.
- Reduced pay and non-pay costs reduced by around £5.9m despite inflationary pressures.
- Cash holdings as of 31 July 2025 of £56.6 million, equivalent to approximately 80 days of expenditure.

The CFO assured the Court that the results so far demonstrate that the University's actions were delivering tangible improvements and the University is in a more sustainable, resilient and strategically focused position. She thanked colleagues who have been involved in the strategic projects.

c. 2024/2025 Highlights

The Acting VC reflected on highlights from 2024/2025, noting the positive impact the University was making regionally and globally.

i) *Engaging Locally*

The Kent & Medway Business Summit brought together businesses, local authorities, politicians, policymakers, academics and entrepreneurs to focus on shared issues such as AI adoption, devolution, transport and workforce skills needs.

Partnership work with dozens of schools and colleges across the region, including sponsorship of the successful University of Kent Academies Trust, raising aspirations and ensuring that talent, rather than background determined opportunity.

ii) *Regional Anchor through Innovation*

The University's new Creative Digital Innovation Hub, Medway Docking Station was set to celebrate its Topping Out Ceremony on 24th June 2026. The hi-tech production facility and co-working space would be a focal point for knowledge exchange, skills development and enterprise activity.

Parky's Preloved charity shop, within Canterbury campus' Parkinson's Centre, provided a sustainable way to support the Centre's pioneering work and also created opportunities for volunteering, community engagement and social connection.

The Kent Community Oasis Garden, developed in partnership with MIND, provided a space for students, staff and local residents to come together through gardening, food growing, environmental activities and shared learning.

iii) *Research and Academic Impact*

The launch of the Centre for Advanced Diagnostics Development and Application (CADDa) had brought together world-class expertise to accelerate the development of new diagnostic technologies. This project was showcased at the last meeting of Court and continued to advance.

Development of the world-first OCT-Raman diagnostic system deployed at Nottingham City Hospital showcased the University's ability to improve healthcare outcomes and deliver tangible clinical benefits.

The play *Generation FOMO* explored the experiences of young people growing up in a world shaped by social media, constant connectivity and digital pressures, transforming research findings into a touring theatrical production. In January 2026 the play was performed in the House of Commons followed by a post-show panel discussion.

iv) *University of Sanctuary*

In 2025, Kent was recognised as a University of Sanctuary, reflecting its commitment to creating a welcoming environment for refugees, asylum seekers and displaced people through scholarships, outreach programmes, and partnerships.

v) *Right to Food*

Kent became the world's first Right to Food University, and continued to advocate for food security and food equality by bringing stakeholders together. The University's work was recognised through a Green Gown Award for Benefitting Society.

526. MERGER WITH UNIVERSITY OF GREENWICH AND ESTABLISHMENT OF LONDON AND SOUTH EAST UNIVERSITY GROUP (LASE)

The Acting VC and John Duffy, Chief Operating Officer and University Secretary, provided a presentation on the merger with the University of Greenwich and the formation of the London and South East (LASE) University Group, set to be completed on 1st August 2026.

The Court was reminded that the universities had worked together for over 20 years and continue to share facilities on the Medway campus, all indicative of the potentials of the merger. The Acting VC stated that the merger was projected to provide new opportunities for growth, sustainability and resilience. Both Kent and Greenwich would benefit from their

shared resources, bringing together over 50,000 students to become one of the UK's largest Higher Education Institutions.

The Acting VC clarified that students would see no change in their day-to-day experience and branding would continue to identify the University of Kent and the University of Greenwich as separate academic divisions of the LASE, as specified in the Merger Deeds. The Acting VC noted this as a pioneering step as LASE was the first to receive permission to use the 'university' title for the group and its sub-brands. The Acting VC outlined the key principles underpinning the merger and noted several benefits to be harnessed by students, staff, and the region, such as access to more apprenticeships, online courses and short courses, a wider network of campuses, facilities, and networks. Staff would benefit from streamlined structures and processes across the University Group, alongside enhanced research opportunities, and access to labs and facilities

The Acting VC stated that regular course reviews would be undertaken to allow the sub-brands to target their different core markets effectively, and they would possibly offer jointly operated courses in future. The Court was also informed that the Kent & Medway Medical School would continue to operate in partnership with Canterbury Christ Church University.

The Chief Operating Officer and University Secretary explained the new corporate structure. He stated that LASE would be a Company Limited by Guarantee and that since Greenwich was already structured in this way, its Articles of Association had been repurposed for the new structure. The structure would also allow the addition of more academic divisions if other institutions wish to join in future. Kent assets and staff would be transferred into LASE with Kent staff retaining their existing contractual terms, in line with the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations. LASE would have a single Academic Board.

Questions

A member queried how the University's brand identity would be maintained, noting that the Merger Deed included a provision that there were two academic divisions. The Acting VC responded that two Deputy Vice Chancellors would be appointed to oversee the respective brands. Further that following merger completion, work would continue on brand differentiation, and this would require the assistance of local and regional stakeholders.

A member queried whether Kent would retain its strength in academic research. The Acting VC confirmed that one of the core pre-merger considerations was how the combination would enable the University to further strengthen its research excellence in its areas of focus.

A member queried why no mention of the merger had been made at the previous meeting of Court. It was explained that due to commercial sensitivity and regulatory restrictions, no express public statement could be made at that time, but it had been mentioned that innovative solutions were being considered to resolve the University's challenges.

A member expressed concern that advance communication had not been provided regarding this being the final meeting of the Court. The Chief Operating Officer and University Secretary apologised and explained that the sensitive and fast-moving nature of negotiations

had had to be handled carefully as a premature release of information could have had an adverse effect on student recruitment. He confirmed that as the Court would no longer exist in the new structure, this would be its final meeting but the University would continue to maintain engagement with all stakeholders, albeit in a different way, notwithstanding the merger. There would be subsequent communication on the new engagement channels.

A member referred to the economic ambitions of the merger and stated that since the University was a charity with associated charitable objectives, it could not consider economic growth as a core objective but only an indirect benefit. The Acting VC acknowledged the importance of teaching, scholarship and research and noted that LASE would continue to pursue charitable objectives.

A member queried what plans LASE had in regard to the hard sciences. The Acting VC confirmed that the hard sciences were still very much part of the University's academic strategy.

A member noted that funding support for PhD submissions had declined and queried whether this would improve following the merger. The Acting VC explained and Court noted that financial pressures had caused budgetary strains and that although the merger would not be a 'magic bullet', it would allow a review of spending priorities that could assist research work. Kent's research reputation and Greenwich's international networks and profile would also complement each other. In relation to the REF, the funding formula for the coming exercise had not yet been released but indicators generally favoured larger institutions.

527. 60th ANNIVERSARY

Professor Iain Wilkinson, Associate Pro-Vice Chancellor - Civic Mission, gave a presentation on the 60th Anniversary of the University of Kent.

The Court noted that the University had maintained a strong focus on purposeful civic engagement through community collaboration, partnerships with local schools and colleges and embedding student outreach in curricula. Professor Wilkinson stated that this work would be enhanced by the merger, mentioning for example, how Greenwich's research strength in food production complements Kent's work on Right to Food.

He noted that many events were being held to celebrate the Diamond Anniversary of the University of Kent and shared the following notable events:

- Kent Diamonds - celebrating inspiring students, staff and alumni.
- Inaugural Innovators – eight members of The First 500 students were welcomed back to campus to share their memories and stories of what the University was like in 1965.
- Threads and Legends – a catwalk event starring 60 student models, ASPIRE designers, and performances from University societies.
- Humanity at a Crossroads symposium – following excerpts from original recordings of pioneering post-colonialist theorist Edward Said's 1985 Kent lectures, participants explored debates on culture, power, and empire in 2026.

Professor Wilkinson encouraged Court members to participate in the Diamond Anniversary weekend event *We Are Kent* between 19th-21st June 2026, bringing together alumni,

students, staff and friends to celebrate the University's shared history. The Chancellor echoed the invitation and stated that she was looking forward to the activities on campus.

Court noted that information on the events could be found on the University's website.

528. CLOSING

The Acting VC encouraged Court members to continue to engage with the University and noted that they could contact alumni@kent.ac.uk and councilsec@kent.ac.uk.

The Chancellor mentioned the appointment of the following Kent officers as designates of LASE and stated that they would continue to ensure that the interests of Kent remain at the heart of LASE: YolanDa Brown (Chancellor-Designate), Mark Preston (Chair-Designate) and Georgina Randsley de Moura (Deputy Vice- Chancellor and Deputy CEO Designate).

The Chancellor thanked all those present for attending the meeting and, noting that this was the final session of Court, for their contributions and support over many years. The Chancellor then formally closed the meeting.

Attachment: Annex A Attendance and Apologies for the meeting

Approved by the Chancellor

3 August 2026

Annex A

UNIVERSITY OF KENT

Court AGM: 19 June 2026

Present (as noted via MS Teams attendance list):

Chancellor & Council	Other Members & Attendees	
YolanDa Brown, OBE, (Chancellor)	Emeritus Professor Michael Went	Robin Lunn
Mark Preston, Council Chair	Emeritus Professor Roger Vickerman	Adrian Roper
Professor Georgina Randsley de Moura (Interim VC)	Emeritus Professor Nick Grief	Abbey Furnedge
Kim Lowe	Emeritus Professor Murray Smith	Joanna Griffiths
Philip Jordan	Emeritus Professor John Todd	
Nicola Berry	Emeritus Professor Alan Chadwick	
Dr Balihar Sanghera	Emeritus Professor John Wightman	
Daniel Knox	Emeritus Professor Anna Corrias	
Himadri	Emeritus Professor Peter Hydon	
Senate	Professor John Dickinson	
Chris Deter	Professor Adrian Podoleanu	
Dr Marie Kerin	Professor Michael Smith	
Dr Becky Hall	Revd Peter Sherred	
Lewis Sawyer	Mary Sherred	
Janet Carter	Jeremy Park	

Members who submitted apologies:

Paul Pugh	Professor Mark Smales
Julie Kelly	The Very Revd. David Monteith
Claire Peppiatt-Wildman	Lauren Edwards MP
Cláudia Moreira	Emeritus Professor Byron J.T. Morgan
Jahanara Ahmed	

In attendance:

John Duffy (Chief Operating Officer and University Secretary);

Sarah Megson (Deputy University Secretary);

Lanre Folarin (Governance Manager);

Jamie Cox (Governance Support Officer);

Imogen Clarke (Governance Support Officer);

Jane Higham (Chief Financial Officer);

Frank Richardson (Director of Finance);

Susan Simmonds (Head of Communications (Interim))

Joseph Devo (Interim Director of External Engagement)

Iain Wilkinson (Associate Pro-Vice Chancellor - Civic Mission)