



PRESENT:

Sue Sturgeon  
 David Goosey (Virtually)  
 Alison Blight  
 Lesha Chetty  
 Gary Headland  
 Smitha Nair  
 Andy Stone  
 Emma Shipp  
 Kathy Slack

Chair of the Corporation  
 Vice Chair of the Corporation

Chief Executive Officer

Jon Adams  
 Steve Ball  
 Louise Basu  
 Neil Brookes  
 Paul Newman

Deputy Chief Executive Officer  
 Chief Strategy Officer  
 Chief Operating Officer  
 Chief People Officer  
 Executive Director Faculty and Campus (North)  
 Executive Director Faculty and Campus (South)

Peter Ryder  
 Lauren Ward

External Board Reviewer, Rockborn  
 Governance Officer / Minute Taker

CLERK:

Amy Gleeson

Head of Governance / Clerk to the Corporation

MINUTES

The meeting started at 17.35.

MINUTE NO.

ACTION RESOLUTION

1. **Apologies**
- 1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Cathie Prest, Natalia Malczewska and Latifah Taha.
  - 1.2 David Goosey joined the meeting virtually.
  - 1.3 The Board welcomed Peter Ryder from Rockborn, who was undertaking the

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ACTION  
RESOLUTION

2. **Declarations of Gifts, Interests, and Hospitality**

2.1 Emma Shipp (ES) declared that she had been appointed as the External Representative on the University College Estate Management (UCEM) Audit Committee, pending approval at their next Board meeting. The Board noted that there was no conflict on the agenda.

2.2 The CEO declared he had attended a dinner hosted by the Capital City College Group, and Activate Learning was gifted a book.

2.3 The Chair declared that she had recently attended the Guildford Book Festival Readers Day on Activate Learnings behalf, and a free lunch was provided.

2.4 The Head of Governance confirmed that the Declarations of Interests, Gifts and Hospitality register would be updated accordingly.

3. **Minutes of the meeting on Tuesday 13 February 2024**

3.1 The Board approved the minutes of the meeting on Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> February 2024 as an accurate record.

4. **Matters arising from the meeting on Tuesday 13 February 2024**

4.1 There were two outstanding matters arising from the meeting on Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> February 2024. All other items had been completed.

4.2 The CEO updated the Board on the progress of his action to add Cybersecurity to the Strategic Risk Register. The CEO advised that Cybersecurity was added to the risk register which was presented to the Audit & Risk Committee alongside some other operational risks. The Audit & Risk Committee had also conducted a deep dive into the organisations Cybersecurity which had been reflected in the meeting papers. The Board noted that Cybersecurity had also been reviewed by GET as part of their routine review system and the CEO was confident that the team were keeping current on the dynamic risk and conducting rigorous testing. The risk will be added to the Strategic Risk Register moving forward so that the Board could continue to be updated on the progress. The Chair of the Audit & Risk Committee confirmed that the deep dive provided assurance that checks were in place and tests were happening.

4.3 The CEO advised that the second action, 'Review the 'Quality of Employer Engagement,' had been completed and was reflected throughout the meeting papers.

5. **Organisational Objectives and Strategic Risks (Balanced Scorecard)**

5.1 The Board received the Bal.143 (j)-6.6 (ect)4.9 (i) Tw 1da0na.0415 .043 0 Td (papei) Tw ,of i c ay tka  
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efforts after hearing from the HR team at the recent SAR meeting. The CEO agreed to provide data on staff turnover alongside the staff survey results.

ACTION: Provide data on the staff turnover alongside the staff survey results.

5.10 One governor asked about reporting in relation to the Employer Journey. The CEO advised that there had been an emphasis, in line with the organisation objectives, on the quality and relevance of the organisation's education provision and the Learner Journey, including safeguarding and managing the substantial growth of learners. The Staff Journey has also been a focus because the staff are critical to the organisation's success. The CEO provided an update on the Employer Journey including the work to gain funds through the local skills improvement funds to generate new programmes to meet the demand of employers and the substantial investment into Sustainability Bootcamps, which have been designed to be suited to the needs and demands of employers.

#### Organic Growth

5.11 The CEO provided an update on the organisation's organic growth. Previously the organisation had income of around £86m and this year the forecast outturn was around £98m. The CEO highlighted the organic growth of 16 to 18-year-old learners referred to Project 1000 included within the paper. The Board noted that the 16-18 organic growth and the uplift in funding rates mean it is a good part of the organisation's business model, and that the organisation would not become complacent as the demographic situation would decline towards the end of the decade. Other areas for growth would be discussed at the Governance and Strategy Day such as the Online provision. The Board noted that the Online provision was still a regulated, core funded activity but it had grown exponentially. Other examples of organic growth included the launch of HTQS in Business, HTQS in Technology and the Sustainability Bootcamps.

5.12 The CEO advised that non-organic growth had not been as fast paced and reminded the Board of the two acquisitions which the organisation had explored. The Board noted that the organisation had hired a recently retired Managing Director to support the COO to produce a UK commercial and international strategy and plan for growth.

5.13 The CEO gave an update on apprenticeships and highlighted that the DfE expected colleges to reach 67% achievement by 2025. The Board noted that Activate Learning's forecasted achievement this year was 58%. There was strong focus on improving quality which was now heading in the right direction. The CEO also informed the Board about the development of a Level 3 Teaching Assistant with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), a capability the organisation had created to meet emp.6 ( 3)1nt oarda.6 ( )TJ 5 ( Dis)-5 (a)-3.3 (b(ec)-2 (te ))TJ - [(d [



6.3 The Chair concluded that overall, the IP discussion was open, honest, realistic, based on accurate data, and uncovered a positive trend with the organisation moving in the right direction. The Board noted that governors had asked challenging questions and the teams involved had welcomed the challenge and provided honest answers.

[A-Level Review and Level 5 Learning & Skills Teacher Improvement Plan.](#)

6.4 In the absence of Cathie Prest (CP), Quality of Education Link Governor, the DCEO shared the following feedback from Cathie on the A-level Review and Level 5 Learning and Skills Improvement Plan:

[A-Level Review.](#)

Cathie Prest felt that Hannah O'Neil, Group Director for A-Levels at City of Oxford, has a clear plan of action to drive improvement and has a consistent approach across all faculties and the four campuses that deliver A-Levels. Cathie felt as if the conversation was open and honest and was very pleased to see plenty of bespoke continuing professional development and support for staff to develop skills. She said there is evident stretch and challenge for staff, such as encouragement for them to become markers for exam boards to help develop their understanding of assessments, and the team are rigorously sticking to course entry requirements when recruiting students to ensure the right student is on the right program. There is scrutiny on students validated progress ratings to ensure students are making the necessary progress, and strong use of student feedback is helping to drive improvements. Governors were asked to ensure Activate Learning was recruiting staff now for September, due to strong competition from schools and sixth forms. There is encouragement to look at sufficient resources and ensure they are in place to support the curriculum reforms coming in 2025. There is a trend in how Activate Learning invests in and supports Level 3 students, where skills are lower, but the course and qualification proves to be more demanding and mismatched with skills support from the pandemic.

Cathie highlighted staffing for A-Levels at Guildford Campus from September 2025 will be a key area of focus, needing time, planning, and investments.

[Level 5 Skills and Improvement Plan, with particular emphasis on Apprenticeships.](#)

Cathie held discussions as to how the anticipated OFSTED inspection can be managed. Cathie feels confident that Teaching, Learning and Assessment is sound and good, however there are requirements to be clearer on the data. She feels Activate Learning is in a good place for initial teacher inspection, which will undergo separately from the college this term.

6.5 The Board that the Key Performance Indicators (KPI) for Level 5 learners had been included on page 12 of the pack for transparency.

[Quality and Consistency Performance Update paper, April 2024.](#)



6.13 The DCEO extended her thanks to the governors, for their support and contributions during the Improvement Plan process. She especially thanked Cathie Prest for her continuous challenges on data.

Higher Education Update.

6.14 The Board noted that the organisation was on track to exceed the target of 90% achievement, by 6%.

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7.5 The Board noted that the organisation was projected to exceed the surplus by £100K by using the effective budget plan. EBITDA was forecasted to be £1.7M higher than what was generated last year, despite being a year of investment. The Board also noted points in variance of income, particularly around growth in high needs and exceptional growth in 16-18 learners.

**Investment Fund.**

7.6 The Board noted that there had been a change in the allocation of Activate Learnings £1.8M investment funding, with £1.4M going towards capital

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ACTION  
RESOLUTION

the only change was the job title for the Head of Governance and agreed to approve the Risk Management Policy.

RESOLUTION: The Board approved the Risk Management Policy.

Search and \* R Y H U Q D Q F H &y.

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8.12 The Board received the Corporation Membership paper which was taken as read.

8.13 ES provided an overview of the Search and Governance Committee's request to run a targeted recruitment process for three external governors with knowledge and expertise in Special Education Needs (SEND), Health and Well-being and Careers guidance. The Board noted that the recruitment would also aim to enhance the diversity of the Corporation Board with a focus on ethnicity, age, LGBTQ+ and disability. The Executive Director of Faculties and Colleges (South) suggested the recruitment of a Governor with Landbased experience to as the organisation has a Landbased college. ES agreed that the Search and Governance Committee would take this into consideration for future recruitment.

RESOLUTION: The Board approved for the Search and Governance Committee to run a targeted recruitment process for three external governors to address the identified knowledge, experience, and diversity  
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Board

Committee Appointments. i

8.14 ES highlighted the recommended committee appointments which had been outlined with the membership paper. The Corporation Board approved the appointment of Smitha Nair to both the Audit & Risk and Remuneration Committee and the reappointment of Kathy Slack to the Search and Governance Committee for a second term of office.

RESOLUTION: The Board approved the appointment of Smitha Nair to the Audit & Risk Committee for a three -year term, until 30<sup>th</sup> April 2027.

Board

RESOLUTION: The Board approved the appointment of Smitha Nair to the Remuneration Committee for a three -year term, until 30<sup>th</sup> April 2027.

Board

RESOLUTION: The Board approved the reappointment of Kathy Slack to the Search and Governance Committee for a further term of office , until 30<sup>th</sup> April 2027.

Board

9. Link Governor Updates

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