



HARTPURY

Minutes of the Meetings of Hartpury University and Hartpury College Boards 10am Wednesday 19th November 2025 Gwynne Holford, Hartpury House and Microsoft Teams

Members	University Board	College Board
Edward Keene	Present (Chair)	Present (Chair)
Alison Blackburn	Present (Co-opted Governor)	-
Patrick Brooke	-	Present
Robert Brooks	Present	
Gareth Smith	Apologies (HE Student Governor)	
Barbara Buck -	-	Present
Andy Collop (Professor)	Present (Vice-Chancellor)	Present (Executive Principal)
Alastair Grizzell		Present (Vice-Chair)
Ben Thomas	-	Apologies (FE Student Governor)
Mary Heslop	-	Present
Henry Hodgkins	Present	-
Thomas Legge	Apologies (HE Staff Governor)	-
Melissa Orritt	-	Apologies (FE Staff Governor)
William Marshall	Present	-
Chris Moody	Present	Present
Bill Meredith	-	Present
Lucie Hammond	Present	-
Ian Robinson (Professor)	Present (Vice-Chair)	-
Sue Blake		Present
Rose Stephenson	Present	-
Helen Wilkinson	-	Present
Fiona Reece	Present	-
In Attendance		
Mick Axtell	Apologies (Chief Operating Officer)	Apologies (Chief Operating Officer)
Rosie Scott-Ward	Present (Deputy-Vice-Chancellor)	-
Gillian Steels	Present (Clerk to the Board)	Present (Clerk to the Board)
Claire Whitworth	-	Present (College Principal)
Jason Smerdon	Present (Director of Finance)	Present (Director of Finance)
Lesley Worsfold	Present (Chief People Officer)	Present (Chief People Officer)
Raphaella Knight	-	Present (Deputy FE Student Governor)
Carol Davey	Present Items 1-6 inclusive (Forvis Mazars)	Forvis Mazars

		ACTION & ACTION DATE
01/11/25	Welcome	
	<p>Apologies and Confirmation of Quoracy Apologies as detailed above.</p> <p>It was confirmed the meetings of the University Board and the College Board were quorate.</p>	
02/11/25	Declaration of Interest	
	The Clerk advised that members' interests would be taken as those disclosed in the	

	<p>Register of Members Interests.</p> <p>Standing Interests – Chair, Vice-Chancellor/Principal and Chris Moody members of both University and College Boards.</p> <p>Hartpury Subsidiaries – Proposed Letter of Support - Interests noted for Edward Keene, Andy Collop and Henry Hodgkins and Hartpury College Governors as Directors– unable to vote or be signatories to proposed letter</p>	
03/11/25	<p>Minutes of the meetings</p> <p>The Minutes of the University Board and the College Board meetings held on the 24th September 2025 and 6th October 2025 were agreed by the respective Boards to be true and accurate records.</p> <p>The Minutes of the Meeting of the FE Board 4th November 2025 were agreed to be true and accurate records.</p>	
04/11/25	<p>Matters Arising</p> <p>An action log had been provided updating on issues raised at previous meetings.</p> <p>Financial Regulations – update process ongoing. Scheduled for SFR Feb 26 meeting Bad Debt – update scheduled for SFR Feb meeting. Borrowing Process – complete. Strategic Risks - noted these would now come to each Board as a distinct item, as well as through the Audit & Risk Management Committee to further enhance Board familiarity with the risks and to enable them to be reviewed with the context of the KPI performance.</p> <p>The update was NOTED.</p>	
05/11/25	<p>KPIs – Confidential Commercial Sensitivity 3 years KPI Update & Strategic Risk Register</p> <p>The Boards considered the latest KPI update and the Risk Register for Strategic Risks which had been added to the agenda to further support oversight by the Board.</p> <p>The Board agreed it was helpful to have this improved Board visibility. It was noted that the detail of the risks highlighted were discussed at the relevant Board Committees, but that the aim was to enable a forum additional Board input/challenge.</p> <p>Confidential Discussion - Redacted</p> <p>It was noted that Committee meeting agendas were now also including specific consideration of risk.</p> <p>The KPI Update and the Strategic Risk Register were NOTED.</p>	
06/11/25	<p>Annual Accounts Consideration & Reports from Audit & Risk Management Committee</p> <p>Audit Committee Annual Report – University and College External Audit Report</p> <p>Carol Davey Forvis Mazars – External Auditors - explained the process used for the Audit of the Financial Statements, outlining the processes undertaken by Forvis Mazars including consideration of risk, income recognition, and the range of checks undertaken. This</p>	

included consideration of the subsidiary companies, review of capital, review of controls – and assurance that management are not overriding the controls. Debtors were considered and management challenged on the reasons for any bad debt write off. The auditors had not identified any issues in these areas. The audit had considered the catering contract and accruals included within the Financial Statements and been satisfied at the provision. The control points raised within the audit were highlighted. It was confirmed that the control points raised the previous year had either been actioned or were being actioned, and that it was considered that good progress had been made.

It was confirmed that Post Audit & Risk Management Meeting Forvis Mazars had confirmed they were comfortable with going concern statement and confirmed management had provided responses to all issues raised in the management letter.

The University and College Boards NOTED the External Audit Report, and that the External Auditors had provided an Unqualified Opinion.

Accounts – Summary Document

The Director of Finance confirmed that the Audit had proceeded well. He highlighted that the reinforced Finance Team meant that there were now three qualified accountants, and that more automated processes had been put in place. It was noted that a SORP 102 (Statement of Operating Practice 102) would be in place for the next financial statements and that a briefing was to be provided to the Audit & Risk Management Committee and the Strategy Finance & Resources Committee.

**Mar/May
26**

Audit and Risk Management Committee Minutes November 2025

The Chair of the University Audit & Risk Management Committee updated on the recent meeting where the Financial Statement documentation had been considered. She advised that the process had been smooth and thanked the Hartpury Finance Team and Forvis Mazars. It was confirmed that the External Audit opinions were unqualified. Governors' responsibilities in relation to the consideration & approval of the Financial Statements, and in particular Appendix E, were highlighted. It was noted that Limbury Limited, after being dormant for a period of years, had been removed from the Companies House Register.

It was noted that the meeting had been the last meeting of Internal Auditors TIAA and that MHA, the incoming Internal Auditors had also attended, and that relationships were being developed. The Internal Audit Plan for 2025-26 had been approved.

The Chair of the College Audit & Risk Management Committee confirmed the briefing provided.

The Chair of the Board noted that SFR had also scrutinised the Financial Statements.

It was confirmed that the University and College Financial Statements were recommended by the University and College Audit and Risk Management Committees respectively.

The Minutes of the Committee were noted.

	<p>Internal Audit Annual Report - The University and College Boards NOTED the Internal Audit Report, and that the Internal Auditors had provided an Unqualified Opinion.</p>
	<p>Letter of Management Representation - The respective Letters of Representation were APPROVED for signing by the Hartpury University and College Boards.</p>
	<p>Letter of Support Hartpury Rugby Ltd The Chair, Vice Chancellor and Principal, Henry Hodgkins and Barbara Buck abstained from discussion of this item and did not vote on this item.</p> <p>The University Board APPROVED the Letter of Support for Hartpury Rugby Ltd and for it to be signed by two independent governors.</p>
	<p>Annual Accounts – Hartpury Rugby Limited It was NOTED these had been approved by the Hartpury Rugby Ltd. Board and were included within the University Group Accounts.</p>
	<p>Annual Accounts Rudgeley Services Limited It was NOTED these had been approved by the Rudgeley Services Limited Board and were included within the University Group Accounts.</p>
	<p>Confirmation College as a going concern Hartpury College was confirmed as a Going Concern by the Hartpury College Board.</p>
	<p>Financial Accounts and Annual Report – Hartpury College of Further Education Company The Hartpury College Board APPROVED the Financial Accounts and Annual Report for Hartpury College of Further Education College Limited.</p>
	<p>Confirmation University as a going concern Hartpury University was confirmed as a Going Concern by the Hartpury University Board.</p>
	<p>Financial Accounts and Annual Report – Hartpury University The Hartpury University Board APPROVED the Financial Accounts and Annual Report for Hartpury University.</p>
	<p>Top Risks – these were NOTED. It was noted that work also continued on the development of the Risk Appetite Statement.</p>
	<p>H&S Policy – This was APPROVED by the College & University Boards.</p>
07/11/25	<p>Vice-Chancellor and Executive Principal Update Including Strategy Update</p>
	<p>The Vice-Chancellor and Executive Principal gave a briefing which covered internal and external factors.</p>
	<p>Post-16 Education and Skills White Paper - initiating major reforms to higher education, focusing on boosting skills, strengthening the Lifelong Learning Entitlement (LLE), and increasing tuition fees in line with inflation. Key changes also included tougher compliance for student visas, a potential 6% international student fee levy (unclear how this would work</p>

	<p>at this point).</p> <p>Tuition Fee Rises – potential for them to be linked to the Teaching Excellence Framework in the future. It was highlighted that there were significant changes being developed to this process.</p>	
	<p>The role of OFS continued to be strengthened.</p> <p>The Vice-Chancellor and Executive Principal highlighted the importance of demonstrating links to the Skills Agenda and the Industrial Strategy and noted this was on going work. LSIPs (Local Skills Improvement Plans) which had involved colleges significantly were now expected to also include universities.</p>	
	<p>Colleges – focus to build on excellence. V'level introduction was set out in principle. Detail was still being developed by the government, but the aim was for a 2027 introduction. It was recognised that this would need to be ready for marketing in 2026 which could be a challenging timescale. Governors queried if the V'levels would be exam or practically based. Clarity on this wasawited.</p> <p>A review of 16-19 funding was ongoing. Currently a significant proportion of Hartpur's 16-18 provision was more highly weighted because of the equipment and environment it required for landbased provision. Hartpur was lobbying with LANDEX to ensure the reasons for the weighting continued to be recognised and maintained.</p>	
	<p>Technical Excellence Colleges (TECs) were being further developed with a wave for construction ongoing. Hartpur was waiting to see what the position would be for agriculture.</p> <p>There was increased focus on colleges and universities collaborating which put Hartpur in a good place to demonstrate integration.</p>	
	<p>A governor noted that any changes which were dependent on parliamentary time would take longer to progress. A governor queried how the balance of potential increase to home fees would balance against the levy on international students. The Vice-Chancellor and Executive Principal advised that given Hartpur's balance of home to international students that Hartpur would see a net benefit. At the moment it was unclear who would pay the levy – the institution or the student.</p>	
	<p>Hartpur Highlights</p>	
	<p>2025 Graduations – an excellent event, much appreciated by students, parents and staff. The Graduation Team were formally thanked for their work.</p>	
	<p>Womens Rugby Stars – celebrated as role models, noting roles across the four nations – event had been held to mark their achievements.</p>	
	<p>KEF (Knowledge Exchange Framework) – performance highlighted.</p>	
	<p>Commercially confidential section redacted – 5years</p>	

08/11/25	<p>Research, Knowledge and Exchange Update Statement and Report on Research Integrity</p>	
	<p>The Concordat to Support Research Integrity makes clear that issues of research integrity must be continually revisited, to guarantee principles are understood and accepted and that newly introduced ethical, legal and professional obligations are met.</p> <p>This Statement was required to meet our annual obligations. There were three key obligations for universities:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify a named point of contact who will act as a first point of contact for anyone wanting more information on matters of research integrity. 2. Provide a named point of contact or recognised an appropriate third party to act as confidential liaison for whistle-blowers or any other person wishing to raise concerns about the integrity of research. 3. Published an annual statement on how they are meeting the requirements of the revised concordat. <p>Obligations 1 and 2 were fulfilled through our policies and procedures, most notably the Procedure for the Investigation of Allegations of Research Misconduct. This Annual Statement fulfils the third obligation and summarises the last academic year (2024-25).</p> <p>Governors queried how AI was being handled within this area. They were advised that a working group was considering AI conduct throughout the institution and benefitting from guidance from JISC. It was noted that the sector as a whole was working through its approach to AI. It was noted that from a research perspective that it could support data analysis but that there needed to be understanding of potential risks and controls. This was being considered with all students, particularly postgraduate. A governor queried if we were typical for the sector. The Deputy Vice Chancellor advised that we had in place current standards, policy and stance and ongoing monitoring.</p> <p>A governor asked for more information in relation to the referrals and the background was further clarified.</p> <p>It was confirmed that sustainability was kept under ongoing review.</p>	
	<p>The University Board APPROVED the Annual Statement be submitted to the Secretariat and shared as a public document on the University website</p>	
	<p>The Pro-Vice Chancellor of RKE was thanked for his work.</p>	
09/11/25	<p>HE Report</p> <p>The Deputy Vice-Chancellor updated on key areas within HE:</p> <p>Commercially confidential section – 5years - redacted</p> <p>3. Student Retention Withdrawal rates stable; early signs show improved retention and strong attendance.</p> <p>4. Academic Structure New structure launches 1 December; staffing underway to meet data demands.</p>	

5. Research & Knowledge Exchange

RKE 2030 action plan in progress amid policy uncertainty.
REF guidance paused; sector opposes proposed two-tier model.
New reporting pilots and HIEF accountability due this year.

6. Quality & Regulatory Updates

- Engaging with OfS and GuildHE on quality reforms and subcontracting oversight.
- Preparing for Lifelong Learning Entitlement changes from 2027.
- Updated Moodle VLE launched; minor issues being resolved.
- Partnership with University Centre Weston concluded with no financial impact.

The HE Report was NOTED.

The Board thanked the Team for their work.

10/11/25 FE Report

The College Principal updated on key aspects from the College:

POLICY / EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT: the external environment continues to evolve and the key areas of focus for us includes: (in addition to other aspects highlighted in previous Board reports):

1. **Further Ofsted updates** – it was noted the new Framework had started on 9th November and a number of inspections were now ongoing. First reports from these would be available in January and would be used to inform Hartpury's preparation for the new framework. It was confirmed that work on this was already ongoing as had been advised at the College Board, and that the Self-Assessment Report and Quality Improvement Plan were being mapped to the new framework. It was noted there would be 5 judgements and 16 grades within the new reports.

It was highlighted that the current Self-Assessment Report, based on the previous framework and 2024/25 was assessing at Outstanding. Work to review Hartpury against the requirements to be Exceptional was ongoing. It was highlighted that the Exceptional grade was expected to be awarded to an extremely small group of institutions and would be challenging to achieve.

2. **The Post-16 Skills White Paper** – the focus on English & Maths as stepping stones was highlighted. The focus on NEETs (Not in Education Employment or Training) was noted – and the link to the Level1 work Hartpury was currently exploring.

3. **Qualification Review & 'V Levels'**

The review of funding and in particular risks around the landbased provision weighting was drawn to the Board's attention. It was confirmed LANDEX was lobbying actively on this area to ensure high quality in resource heavy provision could be maintained.

The College Principal commented on recent positivity towards FE in government attitude, and the recognition of its role in skills development.

RECRUITMENT: overall indicative 6-week numbers enrolled to date were strong and higher than last year, so therefore our largest cohort. Animal Management and Science T-Levels had recruited successfully in their first year. Agriculture T-Levels had seen a slight drop off in recruitment since last year due to students not meeting entry grades albeit, we have retained these students on lower-level courses. Sport, Animal Management, A Levels and Agriculture had recruited well. Access to HE, Equine and OA/UPS were lower than target – work on these areas was in place. The ongoing growth in apprenticeship recruitment was highlighted. Although recruitment was positive it was flagged it was unlikely to be high enough to gain in year growth funding.

The College Principal advised that a new selection process was being used for 26/27.

This involved a personal statement rather than interviews. This had been trialled and had now been rolled out in all areas. She advised that acceptances were up this year. It was confirmed recruitment was kept under ongoing review. A governor questioned whether there was a risk the new process would be a barrier for some potential students. The College Principal advised that there was a thorough email process in place, with examples of the type of statement required provided. She confirmed the position would continue to be monitored.

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT: we continue to drive forward further improvements as reflected throughout the report, focusing on our Quality Improvement Plan actions. One of the key areas of focus was successfully embedding T-Levels. The 2024-2025 Self-Assessment Report and grading along with our 2025-2026 Quality Improvement Plan accompanied the report. It was recognised that this year had seen the achievement of the strongest A'levels results at Hartpury, although it was noted that the current cohort were tracking below this. The College Principal outlined the Student Voice feedback, which confirmed students' high level of satisfaction, sustaining this would be challenging.

Commercially confidential section – 5years- redacted

Governors discussed new curriculum, noting that horticulture was being explored, but queried whether land-based engineering had also been considered. It was confirmed this was offered, but limited by access to facilities. Engineering apprenticeships were to be explored.

The FE Report was NOTED.

The Board thanked the Team for their work.

11.50am Patrick Brooke left the meeting

11/11/25 Student & Staff Voice

Student Governors

Deputy FE Student Governor – no points to raise.

Governor Link Activity – the following visits had taken place:

Ian Robinson – Sustainability

Helen Wilkinson – Agriculture

Robert Brooks - HE & FE – Sport, Outdoor Activities and Uniformed Protective Services – the uncertainty over the future of this course due to government delisting was discussed, it was noted that it was a course which recruited well and was complementary to a range of other courses, with strong outcomes and employer driven)

Mary Heslop – EDI

Alison Blackburn - H& S

Sue Blake – Learning Support & Safeguarding.

Assurance had been provided in relation to safeguarding and morale.

Strategic Issues were highlighted.

The Chair continued his routine meetings with the Clerk and Vice-Chancellor over the

summer.

A number of governors had indicated they would be attending the Graduation ceremonies.

It was noted that involvement in the link governor scheme helped to triangulate the information provided at the meetings.

12/11/25 QuEST Committees

Minutes of the Meetings 11th Nov. 2025

HE – highlights from meeting:

UK Education White Paper 2025: Implications for Specialist Universities

REF (Research Excellence Framework) – uncertainty about requirements nationally – paused – awaiting confirmation

OFS Consultation – future Teaching Excellence Framework process likely to be very different³

OfS Classification Algorithm – requirement to report if using certain algorithms – position being reviewed by sector and Hartpury. – will need to report by July 26 if still using. Governors flagged the need to have a confirmed rationale for approach.

Recruitment

Student Surveys/Achievement - Postgraduate Taught Survey – reduced result – work ongoing – noted small cohort.

Degree Outcomes Statement APPROVED – to go on website

Annual Statement on Research Integrity – Recommended to Board for Approval.

Annual Quality Report – Approved on behalf of the Board

The Annual Quality Report was ENDORSED by the University Board.

FE– highlights from meeting:

Self-Assessment Report and Quality Improvement Plan – approved to recommend to Board – assessed as Outstanding.

New Ofsted Framework Mapping Document Reviewed.

Landex Peer Review of SAR – supported assessment.

Areas at Risk – A'levels – good progress, B'tecs – good progress, T'levels – continuing area of focus as new area of delivery – identification of what had gone well and what needed to improve.

End of contract with DiSE for Rowing noted.

The Self-Assessment Report and Quality Improvement Plan were APPROVED by the College Board.

The Alignment to new Ofsted Framework was NOTED.

13/11/25 Strategy Finance and Resources Committee

Meetings – 6th October, 4th November 2025 – Key Matters highlighted

Annual People Report Approved – Turnover down in all staff groups.

Employment Rights Bill – report covering implications to be brought to SFR in February and key points highlighted to Boards.

Financial Pack (replacing Management Accounts) – new format welcomed.

ULH - a higher cash outflow of £4.1m was now forecast for the University Learning Hub, compared with the original £2.5m budget. Assuming complete end Jan 2026.

Borrowing/Banking Arrangement – Controls to manage the covenants and long-term borrowing arrangements agreed.

OfS Finance Return – scenarios and risks assessed – Recommended to University Board for Approval.

FE & HE Recruitment – on track

OfS Finance Return

The OfS Finance Return was considered. It was confirmed it was recommended for approval by SFR.

It was noted that the return has been prepared at a time when sector funding remains challenging, though there was some optimism that the new government will provide additional support, as evidenced by the recently announced tuition fee increase for home undergraduate students. The plan assumed we would continue to grow HE student numbers but FE student numbers remained flat, with increased staffing costs and some growth in non-pay costs to ensure a high-quality education and service.

Following a review of our cash flow forecasts, we had resumed the construction of the University Learning Hub (ULH), and the plan assumed the ULH construction will be complete in the year ending 31 July 2026. Work will continue to secure additional funding to invest in maintenance of the estate and deliver the Hartpury 2030 Strategy.

The return reflects recent outcomes:

- Higher HE revenues in 2025/26 and beyond due to modest recruitment and retention of home students offsetting reduced entrants from international students, as well as the recently announced rises in tuition fees;
- Higher FE revenues in 2026/27 and beyond due to the strong student intake in 2025/26 and the lagged funding model;
- Additional staff costs to support the higher student intake; and
- No grant funding received in relation to the ULH

The return also included a benefit of £150k p.a. from 2025/26 driven by cost/efficiency savings as a result of the Hartpury Transformation Programme.

The return showed much improved liquidity compared to last year's return. In addition, it showed that we expect to generate a growing surplus each year (before any LGPS pension adjustments) and continue to meet our surplus target of at least 3% of income. The level of surplus was impacted favourably by a 2% rise in the funding per student for FE and the increased number of home HE undergraduate students alongside the fee increases for home undergraduate students. As well as this, we were considering the impact of inflation and forecast pay awards each year.

The OfS Finance Return was APPROVED.

It was noted that the following had been approved under delegated authority:

- **People Annual Report**
- **Prevent Return**
- **TRAC Return**

14/11/25	Search and Governance Committee Minutes of Meetings 14th October 2025 Key Issues covered:	
	Next governor recruitment round – January 2026 - open process with governors encouraged to raise through their networks as well as wide range of other mechanisms. Recruitment Advert and Pack approved.	
	Succession planning – continues to be ongoing	
	Widening Board Diversity – continues to be an area of focus.	
	Informing Challenge - Strategic Risk Register - to be presented with the KPI paper at each routine Board meeting.	
	Focus on Board continuous improvement - highlighted in review of sector issues, Board improvement plan, Board Development and Governance KPIs.	
	Governance KPIs – Approved.	
15/11/25	Application of the Seal - none	
16/11/25	Any Other Business	
	Honorary Degree Window for Proposals – governors reminded of opportunity to propose individuals.	
	Christmas Lecture - governors reminded of opportunity to attend.	
	Two confidential Items – 3 years – redacted	
	The meeting closed at 12.10pm	

APPROVED MARCH 2026