



**University of Hertfordshire Students' Union Board of Trustees Meeting
Thursday, 26th June 2025 on campus and via MS Teams**

Present:

Dr Charmagne Barnes (CB)
Hassan Kyambadde (HK)
Rohit Mahadevu (RM)
Lorena Navea (LN)
Rajiv Sudan (RS)
Bob Walder (BW)

In attendance:

Judith Albert, *incoming Officer Trustee* (JA)
Phillip Dowler, *Director of Advocacy and Opportunities, HSU* (PD)
Sean Ferrie, *Director of Operations, HSU* (SF)
Rebecca Hobbs, *Chief Executive Officer, HSU* (RH)
Karen McKenna, *Secretary, HSU* (KM)
Leena Patel, *Director of People and Resources, HSU* (LP)
Muhtasim Sadat Nibir, *incoming Officer Trustee* (MSN)

1. Welcome

BW was in the Chair and welcomed all Trustees to the meeting. He thanked RM for Chairing the two previous Boards so effectively in his absence.

2. Apologies for absence

Umar Mohamad

Non-Attendance

Ansa Ithal
Pavan Polimuri

3. Declarations of Interest

None noted.

4. Minutes of the last meeting and actions arising

The Board of Trustees approved the minutes of the previous meeting, which was held on Thursday, 29th May 2025.

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5. University Update

CB updated the Board on the current opportunities and challenges facing UH:

- PTES. The survey closed with a response rate of 39.44%, the highest ever achieved, with results due mid-August. CB expressed her delight with this outcome.
- Online teaching. Work is in progress to maximise up to the permitted 20% online delivery of teaching as part of a student engagement strategy to improve B3 outcomes. CB emphasised that this must consist of structured activity, and efforts are ongoing to develop and implement appropriate models.
- Semester C – May 2026. This has been confirmed with programmes for the Business School and SPECS. CB is leading on delivery, and emphasised that, although this will involve a small number of students, their experience must have parity with all other students, despite them joining outside the main university cycle.
- Student Voice Framework. CB outlined the rationale, noting that while UH already does a great deal to empower and enable the Student Voice, there has been a lack of a centralised approach to facilitate, support and encourage it. CB's team have been exploring this and RH will update later in the meeting.
- TEF. CB will be attending an upcoming meeting with the Office for Students to discuss the new TEF, which will form the core of a coherent single system to assess all providers against the requirements for high quality (as set out in the B conditions). This is a desk-based approach which will consider whether campus visits would be a useful part of the assessments. The Gold, Silver and Bronze grading will be retained, and it is proposed operating on a rolling cycle. CB expressed her concerns that, as a result, this could result in different metrics being applied at different times of the year. There is, however, support for the expansion of the framework to include taught postgraduate as well as undergraduate provision, though this could prove problematic due to the phased starting points for postgraduate students. The sector favours an improvement-focused framework with a dashboard for submissions but there are reservations around the favoured methodology for student voice being focus groups, which can be unreliable and unrepresentative. RH agreed and noted her concerns around the use of focus groups and their validity, questioning their true representative nature. She highlighted the issue of 'group think' which can skew perceptions and said a more data-led approach would be preferred. CB will provide a further update to the Board after her meeting with the OfS in July.

BW thanked CB, as always, for the very interesting update, most thought-provoking in the shifting landscape of higher education.

6. CEO Update

The Board received the CEO Update. RH highlighted the following:

- The Student Voice Framework has now been approved, having been created in partnership with RH, the Director of Education and Deputy Director of Academic Quality. Next steps involve embedding the framework into practice, reminding colleagues to incorporate Student Voice within their areas. The Board received a presentation on the detail of the Framework from RH which will be circulated to Trustees. RS asked about the issue of 'survey fatigue'. RH outlined the current Student Voice schedule and confirmed that any new survey requests must now be approved by a panel of four: herself, Head of Insight, Deputy Director Academic Quality Assurance, and Associate Director Teaching and Learning. They will assess requests for timing, content and appropriateness, ensuring

quality assurance, but if the panel are unable to approve a request it will be escalated to CB for further consideration.

7. May Management Accounts

The Board received an update from LP who highlighted the following:

- The year is forecast to finish in line with budget at £3,755, compared with a forecast of £3,403.
- Enterprises have off-set the previously forecast £34k deficit through increased private hire activity, with the full-year forecast now indicating a small profit. LP extended her thanks to SF and his team for their hard work achieving this outcome and BW echoed these words.
- Unbudgeted salary savings between April and July are sufficient to meet the increase in Employers' National Insurance contributions.
- A portion of the salary savings have been allocated to fund the employment of student interns across HR, Training and Development, and in Marketing.

CB left the meeting at 5.00 pm.

8. Elected Officer Update

The Board received a report on the activities of the Elected Officer team from RM, including the action plan for handover to the new Officer team. Highlights of the subsequent discussion included:

- As his term now concludes, RM expressed his gratitude to the Board of Trustees for their support to him during his time in the role. In particular, he thanked BW, UM and RS for, not only their advice and generosity with their time, but, most importantly, their understanding of and willingness to listen to the student voice. He went on to thank RH and her team for their support and encouragement, both to him personally and for the Elected Officer team.
- RS noted the layout of the report and commended the effective use of the colour-coding for status updates. BW agreed, saying that the format would be particularly useful in structuring Officer Trustee feedback within the meeting and for enabling targeted support.
- BW proposed a vote of thanks to RM for all he had achieved during the year and commended his high personal standards and professionalism in office.

9. Year in Review

The Board received a presentation from RH on the last academic year. Highlights of the subsequent discussion included:

- RS asked if there were students who might feel embarrassed or unwilling to approach the Advice and Support Centre but who would benefit from its services, particularly around the issue of student finances. RM replied that improvements to the pacing and timing of the debt-chase process had helped to reduce stress and alleviate pressures on students. RH clarified that while HSU cannot offer direct financial advice, it does support students with general financial skills such as budgeting workshops. RM also highlighted the Blackbullion platform, which offers students access to a free Funding Hub for information on hardship, grants and financial wellbeing.

10. Trustee Recruitment

LP reported that there is currently a vacancy for an External Trustee. The recruitment pack is currently being finalised, with the vacancy scheduled to go live during the first week of July, for one month, via LinkedIn and Trustees Unlimited. Desired areas of expertise for candidates include Marketing, Legal, Higher Education, HR or Commercial. HR will act as the point of contact, and there will be an open invitation for candidates to tour the campus and to meet with BW and/or RH. Applications will then be forwarded to the interview panel comprising UM, as Chair of the People Committee, BW and the President, with RH attending as an Observer. Interviews are expected to take place during August. RS expressed an interest, going forward, in exploring different routes for future recruitment to explore applications from individuals who might not typically consider Trustee roles. He said he hoped that this would ensure the Board reflects diverse perspectives and avoids it becoming 'homogenised'.

LP also reported on the current vacancy for a Student Trustee. The recruitment campaign, featuring Hamnah Baig, a former Student Trustee, received a phenomenal response with a high calibre of candidates. Shortlisting was undertaken by RM and UM, and interviews are currently underway. LP will update the Board, via email, once an appointment has been made.

11. People Committee update

LP reported that the Committee had discussed Trustee Recruitment, as shared with the Board today. In addition, the Committee approved a change to HSU's Memorandum and Articles of Association. Article 6 has been amended to now include provision to reflect the situation where Student Trustees are employed, and a Clause has been added in on the recommendation of The Charity Commission. LP will share this with the Board when the final changes have been made.

Secondly, the Committee have been reviewing the Sexual Harassment Risk Assessment Register. Regulatory changes for the protection of workers against Sexual Harassment - The Worker Protection (Amendment of Equality Act 2010) Act 2023 have now been introduced and this requires employers to proactively identify and assess areas or circumstances in the workplace where there is a risk of sexual harassment. The Risk Assessment Register will now be combined with HSU's Risk Register and colour-coded accordingly. LP noted that this will be shared with the Board in due course.

12. Health, Safety and Wellbeing update

The Board received a presentation from SF on Health, Safety and Wellbeing. Highlights of the subsequent discussion included:

- RS thanked SF for the most comprehensive update. He highlighted the value of 'near misses' being actively reported and how this reflects a healthy, open and no-blame culture. SF agreed, emphasising that rather than being a negative indicator, such reporting is in fact a strong sign of a positive and proactive culture.

13. Finance and Audit Committee update

RS reported that the Committee had discussed the Budget 2025-26 at its last meeting. UH's guidance was to maintain a no-growth position. Increased costs – driven by the rise in Employers' National Insurance contributions, the uplift in National Minimum Wage, and higher supplier

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overheads – have resulted in a projected £135k deficit. After further discussions with UH, the shortfall has been reduced to £26k which can be addressed without significantly impacting student services and staffing provision. RS also highlighted his request for a scenario planning approach for future years, particularly in light of the risk that current financial challenges may continue.

RS also noted his request that a check is carried out with The Charity Commission to confirm the appropriate role of a sub-committee in the budget approval process and to ensure that due process is being followed. RH replied that while the Budget requires full Board approval, the Committee's role is to review and recommend it to the Board.

Finally, the Committee had discussed changes in the reporting of the Management Accounts. LP noted that the cost for this was minimal, at approximately £240 for the year. This will provide greater flexibility, improve accuracy, eliminate manual input, and enable Managers to access real-time financial data, enhancing accountability.

14. AOB

Vote of thanks to the President

RH said it had been the greatest pleasure to work with RM this year and to watch him grow and flourish in his role. He proved himself to be a powerful advocate for all of the students he represented.

Officer Trustees

BW thanked all of the Officer Trustees who had joined the Board this year for their most valuable contributions and active participation throughout the year.

LP thanked the new Officer Trustees for joining the meeting today and, on behalf of the Board, said she looked forward to welcoming them formally as members in the new academic year.

HSU Staff Newsletter

The Board received the HSU Staff Newsletter for information.

Meeting closed at 5.45 pm.

Next Meeting: Thursday, 18th September 2025

Dates for 2025/26 academic year – all meetings run from 4.00 pm to 6.00 pm

Thursday, 18th September 2025

Tuesday, 14th October 2025

Thursday, 13th November 2025

Thursday, 19th February 2026

Thursday, 16th April 2026

Thursday, 14th May 2026