



**Minutes of the Trustee Board meeting  
held on Wednesday, 23 April 2025, 5.30pm to 7.30pm,  
Online via Google Meets**

**MEMBERS OF THE BOARD PRESENT:**

Luca Di Mambro-Moor	Acting SU President and Chair of Trustees
Nour Matar	Sabbatical Officer - Welfare & Liberation Officer
Shada Abdalqader	Sabbatical Officer - Campaigns & Activities Officer
Stephen Norton	External (Lay) Trustee
Kofi Siaw	External (Lay) Trustee
Abigail Mensah	External (Lay) Trustee
Preety Kaur	Student Trustee

**ATTENDEES PRESENT:**

Ed Nedjari	Chief Executive
Victoria Chwa	Strategic Adviser
Wala Osman	HR Manager
Delaweh Hamelo-Mensah	Director of Finance for Westminster SU and Financial Consultant

**APOLOGIES RECEIVED:**

Rhiannon Suchak	Head of Memberships
Oliver Roscoe	Head of Commercial Operations
Danielle Sevenoaks	Communications Manager

**ABSENT:**

Abigail Atta-Panin	Finance Manager
--------------------	-----------------

## **1.0 Welcome, Introductions and Apologies**

- 1.1 The Chair opened the meeting noting apologies from three attendees Rhiannon Suchak, Oliver Roscoe, Danielle Sevenoaks, and one absent Abigail Atta-Panin.
- 1.2 The Chair noted two members of the board late to the meeting. The meeting was adjourned and later re-started with full attendance of members of the board.

## **2.0 Declarations of Conflicts of Interest**

- 2.1 There were no conflicts of interest declared.

## **3.0 Declarations of Any Other Business**

- 3.1 There were two additional items of business identified for discussion. These are detailed under minutes item 19.0.

## **4.0 Action Tracker**

- 4.1 A new initiative was introduced as part of efforts to strengthen administrative practices. An Action Tracker was launched to record any actions arising from Trustee Board meetings and to support Trustees in maintaining oversight of the Union's progress.

Trustees noted the action tracker.

## **5.0 Minutes of the last meeting held 12 February 2025**

- 5.1 Trustees approved the minutes of the last meeting held 12 February 2025 as a correct record.

## **6.0 Chief Executive Updates (Paper A)**

- 6.1 The Chief Executive provided their update to the Board.
- 6.2 The Chief Executive provided an update on staffing changes.

Trustees noted that, rather than pursuing a like-for-like replacement, the Union seeks to conduct a deeper review to better understand what is needed within teams to ensure long-term stability and effectiveness.

- 6.3 The Chief Executive noted that mid-year appraisals are currently taking place

across the organisation. Line managers are identifying development needs among staff that may need to be addressed before the main annual appraisal cycle. Feedback from recent Investors in People (IIP) interviews also highlighted staff development and care as areas requiring attention, and this will be fed into wider organisational planning.

- 6.4 The Chief Executive noted that as part of uncertainties around the Union's block grant funding from the University for the next year, the Union's CARE Project - project against sexual violence - is likewise facing uncertainty around its funding and continued operations. More information around the Union's block grant funding from the University is expected by the time of the next Trustee Board meeting. A dedicated meeting is planned within the team to explore the future of CARE, including what it should look like and how it can continue to support students effectively.
- 6.5 To support planning for the new academic year, all managers have been asked to submit summer plans outlining upcoming projects, role changes, and any proposed team adjustments. These submissions will be used to create a comprehensive organisational plan, which will be shared with the Trustee Board. While most documents have been received, a few are still outstanding due to staff absences.
- 6.6 The Chief Executive also reported on initial engagement with the University's new IT Director. A brief introductory meeting was held, and the Director appears open to collaboration and change, which was noted as encouraging. A visit to the Students' Union has been scheduled for Wednesday, 30 April, to support further engagement.
- 6.7 Early planning has begun for the next cycle of the Union's strategy (2026–2029). As part of the planning process, staff will be undertaking data gathering and preliminary consultation work to help shape strategic direction. Trustees will play a key role in guiding the process. A more detailed proposal will be presented at the next Trustee Board meeting.
- 6.8 Trustees noted the Chief Executive's updates.

## **7.0 Sabbatical Officer Updates (Paper B)**

- 7.1 The Sabbatical Officers provided their updates to the Board, on a range of initiatives currently underway.
- 7.2 The Campaigns and Activities Officer provided their updates to the Board.

A physical housing board has been set up in the Students' Union building to help students find flatmates or advertise spare rooms. The team is working with the Comms department to integrate this more effectively into the SU website using a platform called Padlet. The platform is currently being tested internally to identify and resolve any technical issues before being rolled out to students.

In terms of sports and activities, the annual Varsity event took place and was largely successful, despite some technical difficulties toward the end. The scoreboard overheated and emitted smoke, leading to an early evacuation as a

precaution. Paramedics were in attendance and everyone was looked after. Unfortunately, Goldsmiths lost to Arts. Two matches were postponed and will be rescheduled. The final Activities Committee meeting is scheduled for 28 April and will be held online.

The officer also updated on ongoing campaigns. The African Advocacy Foundation visited the campus four times between February and March to raise awareness of PrEP and HIV, resulting in strong student engagement and participation in testing. In collaboration with the Disabilities Officer, efforts are underway to improve accessibility in the SU building, including plans for a new, permanently operational stage lift. Work is also being done with the University's Health and Safety Officer to support these improvements. A Deaf Awareness Campaign is being planned to coincide with Deaf Awareness Week, and arrangements are being made for Mental Health and First Aid Training for sabbatical officers and some Advice staff, expected to take place over the summer or in early September.

Finally, a careers event is being organised in partnership with the Careers Service, the Immigration team, and individuals on various visa types. The aim is to support the employability of international students as they complete their studies.

### 7.3 The Welfare & Liberation Officer provided their updates to the Board.

Liberation Group Events for the academic year have largely concluded. These included both one-off events and ongoing activities aimed at building community among marginalised student groups, such as LGBTQ+, trans and non-binary students, and disabled students. These events formed part of a wider strategy to re-engage students post-COVID and address previously low levels of student participation.

The Officer noted that the GARA Fund has performed strongly this year, with increased student engagement driven by active promotion on campus and regular communication with potential applicants. As of the latest update, 12 applications had been received: 6 approved, 2 declined, 2 under review, and 2 pending review at the upcoming panel next week. Funded projects include initiatives related to arts, student sports, and a Festival of Black British History. Unlike the previous year when some funds remained unused, the fund is expected to be fully allocated by the end of the cycle. Additional efforts are being made to support successful applicants by promoting their projects within the Goldsmiths community and encouraging use of SU resources.

Regarding the Palestine Scholarship, the officer noted that the Union continues its commitment to supporting Palestinian students as part of its broader support for marginalised groups. This year, the scheme will offer three postgraduate and two undergraduate scholarships, in addition to two deferred scholarships from the previous year. Officers remain engaged with scholarship recipients to support their arrival in the UK and ensure ongoing access to assistance and community connection.

A change in officer responsibilities for the scholarship panel is also noted, with the incoming Welfare & Liberation Officer taking over the position for the upcoming year.

7.4 The Chair invited questions following the Officer Updates and accompanying written report. No questions were raised. The Board then moved on to the next agenda item.

## **8.0 Freedom of Speech Code of Practice (Paper C) & Note on Annual General Meeting**

8.1 The Policy Adviser introduced the accompanying Paper C for approval by the Board.

8.2 The Board received a paper detailing the Union's drafted Freedom of Speech Code of Practice, referenced in Paper C. The Code was initially developed following the passing of the Freedom of Speech Act in Parliament. While recent amendments to the Act have removed the regulatory burden on students' unions via the Office for Students (OfS), the duty to uphold and promote freedom of speech remains a core responsibility. The Code has since been revised to reflect these legislative changes. It was developed in line with OfS guidance and consulted upon with relevant SU staff.

The Policy Adviser noted that the drafted code has also been reviewed by the University, including feedback from the University's Interim Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Education and Student Experience, whose comments were incorporated into the final draft. The Code is now awaiting Trustee Board approval. If approved, it will be uploaded to the Union's website. Additionally, training for all staff will be delivered, and the Code will be highlighted to all members and students on an annual basis.

Trustees were invited to ask questions about the code.

8.3 The Chair opened to the Board for questions to be asked. No questions or concerns were raised.

### **Trustees approved the Union's Freedom of Speech Code of Practice, referenced in Paper C.**

8.4 The Chair returned to the Policy Adviser for a note on the Annual General Meeting (AGM).

The Board was informed that the AGM, originally scheduled for late May, has been postponed to late September. This change was necessary because the proposed constitutional amendments must be approved by Goldsmiths Council prior to being presented at the AGM, and no Council meeting was scheduled in time to meet the original May AGM date. In addition to aligning with the Council's timetable, the rescheduling is also intended to improve student engagement, as student presence and participation is expected to be significantly higher in September, particularly after Welcome Week.

Trustees were informed that the proposed constitutional amendments will be circulated well in advance of the next meeting, allowing sufficient time for review.

**Trustees noted the change in AGM date.**

- 8.5 The Chair invited further questions. No questions were raised. The Board then moved on to the next agenda item.

**9.0 Trustee Board Audit Report (Paper D) (and Audit Update)**

- 9.1 The Chief Executive and Strategic Adviser introduced the accompanying Paper D for approval by the Board.

- 9.2 The Board received an overview of the Trustee Board Annual Report, which forms a key part of the Union's audit submission and will be published on the Charity Commission website. This report, although drafted by staff, is issued in the name of the Trustees, who will review it and confirm that it is a fair, accurate, and truthful representation of the Union's activities over the year.

This year, the process was approached differently. Instead of updating previous report versions, this year's report has been comprehensively rewritten, revised and restructured the content to provide a stronger and more coherent narrative. It was noted that the updated version reflects the Union's work more clearly and effectively than in previous years. The Report also drew efficiently from other existing reports, such as the Impact Reports and Welcome Week Reports, to avoid unnecessary duplication while maintaining consistency across outputs.

Trustees reviewed the document carefully and asked to ensure they are confident in approving and signing off the report before it is submitted to the auditors. Once approved, the report will be made publicly available as part of the Union's annual financial and governance disclosures.

An additional update on the audit process was suggested to follow this discussion to streamline related agenda items.

- 9.3 The Chair noted that the rewritten Audit looked much improved.

The Chair opened to the Board for questions to be asked. No questions or concerns were raised.

**Trustees approved the Trustee Board Audit Report, referenced in Paper D.**

- 9.4 The Chair returned to the Chief Executive for an update on the Audit.

An update was provided on the progress of the 2023–24 audit, currently being conducted by Goodman Jones. Regular updates have been held with the auditors, and the Union remains on track to complete the audit and submit the necessary documents. While some minor documents remain outstanding, partly due to staff illness, these are expected to be resolved in the coming weeks. Some previously submitted documents require updated versions due to changes in timing, but the auditors have confirmed there is nothing that cannot be recovered. The Union's Financial Consultant will also be providing support to ensure continued progress.

The Chief Executive noted that the larger discussion now relates to appointing auditors for the next financial year. Trustees were encouraged to begin considering whether to retain Goodman Jones or explore other options. It was suggested that this conversation should take place within the next two months, potentially at the next Trustee Board meeting or in a separate discussion.

Trustees noted the update on the Audit.

9.5 The Chair spoke to the update on the Audit.

The Chair provided a perspective to the audit update by emphasising that the decision to retain Goodman Jones as auditors should be based on the quality of the audit they produce this year, especially in light of issues experienced during last year's audit.

This led into the next agenda item regarding the potential implementation of a procurement process, which could offer a more structured and transparent approach for Trustees to evaluate future audit providers. It was noted that this would provide an opportunity to assess value for money and ensure that the auditing service meets the Union's standards and expectations moving forward.

## 10.0 Commercial Procurement & Tendering Policy and Process (Paper E)

10.1 Due to apologies by the Head of Commercial, the Chief Executive spoke to the accompanying Paper E for approval by the Board.

10.2 The Board received a summary of the new Procurement Policy, with Trustees having had access to the full document in advance. It was noted that significant time and effort, particularly from the Head of Commercial, had gone into developing the policy, which is grounded in the principles of fairness, transparency, value for money, sustainability, and ethical sourcing. These principles are not only central to internal governance but also align with broader institutional expectations, including the University's sustainability and fair trade commitments. The policy will support both compliance and cooperation with University partners when justification for procurement decisions is required.

10.3 The Chair added their comments, noting that the policy aligns with best practice in the public sector and beyond. Specific attention was drawn to the cost thresholds detailed on page 65 of the papers, which follow the Union's Scheme of Delegation. Contracts or purchases over £20,000 will require a full tendering process, while smaller amounts will follow a stepped process requiring multiple quotes, managed by the Chief Executive, without needing Trustee Board approval. The policy was broadly welcomed as a necessary and well-structured approach to future procurement.

10.4 The Chair opened to the Board for questions to be asked. No questions or concerns were raised.

**Trustees approved the Procurement & Tendering Policy and Process, referenced in Paper E.**

## **11.0 University Position and Key Updates for Trustees**

11.1 A new standing agenda item was introduced to provide Trustees with a dedicated update on developments at Goldsmiths, as a degree of separation from where these updates would traditionally be provided as part of the Sabbatical Officer updates. This is in recognising its relevance as the Union's partner institution, especially in relation to financial, regulatory, and governance matters.

11.2 The Chair highlighted key points from the Sabbatical Officer's written report (Paper B):

There has been a high turnover of senior management at the University in recent months. While this may raise concerns, it has not had a notably negative impact on the SU's working relationship with the institution. Importantly, the SU has been involved in recruitment processes for key roles, including the Director of Student and Academic Services, the University Secretary, and the new Deputy Vice Chancellor for Education and Student Experience, all of whom are due to begin their roles between late April and summer.

On the financial front, the University is not currently operating at a deficit and maintains 30 days of liquidity. However, there is a continuing decline in student recruitment, which remains a critical concern. The most recent Council meeting referenced possible further cuts, although no decisions have yet been made due to current application data being incomplete ahead of September enrolments.

These financial pressures are likely to influence grant negotiations, which will be taking place in the coming week. Trustees were reminded of the broader sector context, where external pressures (such as national higher education funding challenges) intersect with internal issues (such as unmet recruitment targets) to exacerbate financial strain.

The Chair reiterated the Union's commitment to opposing further cuts and ensuring the University recognises the essential role of the SU in supporting student experience and wellbeing.

Trustees were invited to share any questions or comments on the update.

11.3 In response to a question about whether there is a timeline around grant negotiations and finances at the University, the Chair responded that a meeting is scheduled in the coming week, where the Union will present its grant paper, requesting that the current level of funding be sustained into the next academic year.

There has been some frustration with the process due to challenges in timelines as shared by the University's Chief Financial Officer. Despite this, the SU team remains prepared for the upcoming meeting.

It was clarified that a final decision on funding is not expected until July, when the University has a clearer sense of student recruitment figures. The Chair notes that this is concerning, as the Union, like other departments at the University, must plan financially in advance without access to concrete data. At this stage in the application cycle, there is considerable uncertainty around final student numbers, making early speculation about potential funding cuts premature and difficult to justify.

The grant request being submitted is modest and intended only to maintain operational continuity, not to significantly expand activity. The SU team has already considered contingency plans in the event that funding is reduced, including potentially covering small gaps internally with the hope of securing full funding in the following year. The Board was reassured that the ask is both reasonable and responsible, aiming simply to sustain existing work and services. The Board will be updated once these discussions have happened.

## **12.0 Audit Update**

12.1 This agenda item was covered as part of agenda item 9.0.

## **13.0 Management Accounts (Paper F)**

13.1 The Chief Executive noted that no management accounts were received for this meeting of the Trustee Board.

The Board is expecting the management accounts in advance of the next meeting.

## **14.0 Finance Improvement Project**

14.1 Finance Consultant presented on the finance improvement project.

14.2 The Board received a detailed presentation, outlining the findings from a recent Finance Health Check and proposed steps for improving the Union's finance function. This new agenda item reflects the urgent need for reform and strategic development in the finance department.

14.3 The review identified three core issues:

- Lack of Strategic Direction – Frequent turnover in finance leadership has resulted in a reactive approach and limited focus on longer-term improvements and efficiency.
- Skills and Expertise Gaps – The current finance team has development needs, and there is an opportunity to invest in training or reassess roles to ensure the department is fit for purpose.
- Not Fully Meeting Organisational Needs – The finance function has not

consistently provided timely, accurate information, limiting its ability to effectively support decision-making across the Union.

Key feedback from stakeholder surveys included concerns about inconsistent templates, unsatisfactory procedures that undermine confidence, and inefficiencies forcing other teams to create their own workarounds.

It was emphasised that these issues, if left unaddressed, can impact all areas of the Union. To address them, the Consultant will work with the SU to develop a financial control framework covering six core controls (e.g., account reconciliation, timely reporting, segregation of duties, and communication protocols). This framework will be embedded through clear policies and training.

Management accounting was highlighted as a particular weakness, with reports often delayed, inaccurate, or hard to interpret. To improve this, the plan includes:

- Standardising and simplifying reports
- Ensuring reconciliation of accounts
- Delivering clear monthly management accounts within 5–10 working days
- Introducing regular finance meetings with department heads to review results and agree actions
- Embedding a business partnering ethos so finance can proactively support all teams

Another priority is improving financial communication, including:

- A clear schedule of reporting and updates
- Annual training for budget holders
- Regular bulletins on deadlines and developments

A draft timeline was shared, aiming to complete most improvements by the start of the new financial year in August. However, this will depend on staff capacity and any delays caused by the ongoing audit.

The Chief Executive reiterated the seriousness of the findings, acknowledging that while some feedback may sound harsh, it reflects long-standing problems that must be addressed. The Union's leadership is committed to supporting the work over the summer to create a trusted, proactive, and service-oriented finance function.

Trustees were invited to ask questions or follow up by email.

- 14.4 In response to a question on whether the finance team's current state reflects a need for improvement or a more serious issue of being fundamentally undeliverable, the Consultant acknowledged it as an important and challenging point.

He emphasised that delivering regular, timely management accounts is a reasonable expectation, even with a small team. However, a key problem identified is the absence of a clear financial schedule which is a basic framework that outlines when purchases, sales, and reporting tasks should be completed each month. Without this structure, it is difficult to fully assess the capability of the finance staff,

as the lack of direction itself may be contributing to underperformance.

Another issue raised was the quality and reliability of financial data, with concerns about data corruption from E-POS, the Union's commercial software system, which may be affecting reporting accuracy. It is noted that only once a proper structure is implemented alongside clear expectations can the organisation accurately evaluate whether there are deeper skill or performance issues within the team.

The Chief Executive added that while building structure and accountability is essential, this gap reinforces the need for training and development alongside structural reform.

The discussion concluded with agreement that these insights are important for the organisation to take on board as it moves to strengthen its finance function.

## **15.0 Elections Report (Paper G)**

- 15.1 Due to apologies by the Head of Memberships, the Chief Executive spoke to the accompanying Paper G for note by the Board.
- 15.2 In response to the written elections report, the Chief Executive provided additional context, highlighting challenges faced during the elections period.

This year's elections were described as difficult for both staff and candidates, reflecting a broader trend observed across London Student Unions, many of whom reported a notable increase in complaints and contentious incidents. While the exact cause of this sector-wide disruption is unclear, it was widely acknowledged among peers.

At Goldsmiths SU, two nominees were removed before campaigning began, following due process. While these individuals expressed dissatisfaction, there has been no further formal challenge. Another candidate for President was removed during the campaigning period due to serious misconduct, including breaches of election rules and potentially GDPR violations. The case was referred to the University.

Despite these issues, the elections process was successfully delivered, with improved engagement figures compared to the previous year. Although the increase in votes was modest, it occurred in the context of declining student recruitment, making the engagement rate a positive indicator. The elections team, staff, and remaining candidates were commended for their resilience and professionalism, especially those who had to endure difficult behaviour from peers.

Trustees were told that an external-facing report will be shared in due course.

An additional reflection was offered, noting that the rise in complaints across the sector may signal a broader shift in student political engagement. The challenges faced during this year's elections may be symptomatic of changing attitudes and dynamics within the wider political environment, and may warrant a review of

existing elections policies and procedures to reflect the evolving student experience.

Trustees noted the Elections report, with no further questions raised.

## **16.0 Commercial Report (Paper H)**

- 16.1 Due to apologies by the Head of Commercial, the Chair briefly summarised the accompanying Paper H for note by the Board.

The Board agreed that questions on the report can be collected and sent to the Head of Commercial, to be answered via email circulation to the Board later.

- 16.2 Following a challenging period in February, the commercial team has seen improved performance, attributed to increased external engagement with the venue, reforecasting efforts, and a rise in student footfall linked to better weather.

Overall, the team appears to be in a stronger position compared to the previous report.

Trustees noted the Commercial report, with no further questions raised.

## **17.0 Charity Commission Response (Paper I)**

- 17.1 The Board was updated on the outcome of the Charity Commission case, which has now been formally closed. The closure came after multiple follow-ups by the Union's solicitors. While this represents a positive step, the Union leadership expressed concern over the lack of clarity in the Commission's final response.

The Charity Commission's decision did not fully engage with the substantive legal and governance questions raised. Instead, it deferred to existing CC9 and CC3 guidance and suggested that the Union seek further legal advice at its own expense, despite having already done so. The Union's solicitors are now reviewing the Commission's letter and are expected to provide further advice.

It was emphasised that the Union had acted lawfully, transparently, and in line with legal advice throughout, and there was no wrongdoing found.

Trustees discussed whether to:

- Seek further clarification from the Charity Commission;
- Share learning from this experience with other student unions and advocacy organisations such as ELSC to support those facing similar intimidation;
- Treat this as a potential case study to support others, particularly smaller or under-resourced unions.

It was agreed that no immediate action would be taken until further legal advice is

received. Trustees supported the idea of a dedicated meeting to review any advice received and assess options.

The Board recognised the integrity and resilience demonstrated throughout the process and acknowledged that the outcome does reflect a successful defence of the Union's position.

## **18.0 Trustee Board Membership, and Changes reflecting discussion after last Trustee Board meeting**

18.1 The Board noted two key updates regarding trustee membership:

- A new student trustee will be joining the Board in June, following the conclusion of the elections.
- Looking ahead, the Board may transition away from electing student trustees, in line with practices at other Students Unions. Subject to proposed constitutional amendments being approved at the AGM and ratified by Goldsmiths Council, it was proposed that student trustees would instead be appointed through a recruitment process, similar to that of external trustees. This change aims to reduce barriers to participation, allow for a more robust assessment of candidates' skills and experience, and enable better consideration of demographic representation. This proposal will be discussed in more detail at a future Trustee Board meeting.

18.2 The Board also formally acknowledged the resignation of an external trustee, who has stepped down due to personal reasons. Trustees expressed their thanks and appreciation for their long and valued service and wished them well for the future.

## **19.0 Any Other Business**

19.1 The Board held a discussion on the logistics and timing of Trustee Board meetings, noting the importance of ensuring meetings are accessible and not overly burdensome on members' evening schedules. Trustees were invited to share preferences, with a consensus emerging that evenings remain the most predictable and workable, though a slight shift to a 6:00pm start may be more suitable for some members due to work commitments.

The need to accommodate everyone's availability is particularly important as trustees are expected to engage in complex and strategic discussions at Board meetings.

### **19.2 Date of the next meeting (agenda item 20)**

The Trustee Board noted that the next scheduled meeting on 25 June 2025 would clash with a meeting of the Goldsmiths Council, which the Chair needed to attend. As constitutional changes were required to be submitted to that Council meeting, an extraordinary Trustee Board meeting was necessary in early June to consider and



approve the proposed changes.

It was proposed that this extraordinary meeting be held on 4 June 2025, 5pm–6pm. Trustees were asked to confirm their availability or suggest alternative times during the week of 2 June 2025 if unavailable.

The agenda items originally planned for 25 June 2025 were to be rescheduled to the end of July 2025, to allow time for grant approval and budget drafting.

Trustees noted the change and confirmed their availability for an extraordinary meeting to be held on the 4 June 2025, 6pm to 7pm.