



**Minutes of the Trustee Board meeting
held on Wednesday, 29 October 2025, 5.30pm to 7.30pm,
Hybrid at Goldsmiths Students' Union, Dixon Road, London SE14 6NW,
and online via Google Meets
These minutes contain closed items.**

MEMBERS OF THE BOARD PRESENT:

Sofian Kourkzi (SK)	Sabbatical Officer - Education Officer and Interim Chair of Trustees
Shada Abdalqader (SA)	Sabbatical Officer - Welfare & Liberation Officer
Richard Frost (RF)	External (Lay) Trustee
Kofi Siaw (KS)	External (Lay) Trustee
Abigail Mensah (AM)	External (Lay) Trustee

ATTENDEES PRESENT:

Ed Nedjari (EN)	Chief Executive
Victoria Chwa (VC)	Governance and Strategic Projects Coordinator
Duha Abdulghaffar (DA)	Commercial Operations Manager
Danielle Sevenoaks (DS)	Communications Manager

APOLOGIES RECEIVED:

Starr Thomas (ST)	Sabbatical Officer - Campaigns & Activities Officer
Aniq Ahmed (AA)	External (Lay) Trustee
Preety Kaur (PK)	Student Trustee
Chloe Shaffer (CS)	Student Trustee
Oliver Roscoe (OR)	Head of Commercial Operations
Wala Osman (WO)	HR Manager

1.0 Welcome, Introductions and Apologies

- 1.1 The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed attendees. The Chair noted apologies from Starr Thomas, Aniq Ahmed, Oliver Roscoe, and Wala Osman. The Student Trustees were not in attendance.

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.

4.0 Action Tracker

- 4.1 Trustees noted the action tracker.

5.0 Minutes of the last meeting held 30 July 2025

- 5.1 The Chair invited comments on the minutes of the previous meeting. No comments were raised.
- 5.2 Trustees approved the minutes of the last meeting held 30 July 2025 as a correct record.

6.0 Audit Findings Report and Accounts (Year End 2024)

- 6.1 The Board received an update from the auditors on the 2024 audit findings and noted that the accounts had been signed and submitted.
- 6.2 Trustees noted a technical audit qualification relating to auditors not attending the year-end stock take for July 2024, due to the auditor appointment position at the time. It was confirmed the auditors attended the stock take at 31 July 2025 to address this for the 2025 audit cycle.
- 6.3 The auditor outlined that a number of balance sheet control accounts in 2024 had not been fully reconciled to supporting workings. Examples given included accrued expenditure and payroll-related balances. The auditor stated that while differences identified were not material, this indicated a need for improved ongoing housekeeping and regular monthly reconciliations.

- The auditor further noted issues with debtor listings where amounts owed did not reconcile to the ledger, and where receipts had not been allocated or refunds and credit notes had not been processed. The auditor stated this should be tidied up to ensure clarity and support cashflow.
- 6.4 Trustees noted issues arising from the interface between the accounting system and the EPOS system during the year, which resulted in duplicate sales entries where both API imports and manual journals were used. It was reported the API link had been cut (noted as around March 2025) and the auditors recommended it remains cut, with sales posted by journal from EPOS reports unless/ until a more reliable integration method is implemented.
 - 6.5 The Board noted a recommendation to consider moving from a desktop accounting system to a cloud-based accounting system to improve integration options, reduce manual entry, and support process controls (e.g., bank feeds and invoice approval workflows).
 - 6.6 Trustees noted additional observations (not material individually/cumulatively) including differences between supporting records and figures in the accounts in areas such as trade/stock figures and fixed asset records, and the need to ensure prior year opening balances are correctly reflected in the accounting system.
 - 6.7 The auditor flagged an observation from the stock take regarding reuse of bottle labels, including labels being crossed out and manually amended. The auditor stated this could present a health and safety risk with potential implications, and recommended the practice should be stopped.
 - 6.8 The auditor outlined an issue relating to rent-related balances held by the Students' Union arising from historic disputes between students and the University, where payments had been made to the Union while matters were unresolved. The auditor stated their understanding that the University had since written these balances off in its own accounts. The auditor noted that, while it had been suggested these funds could be considered Union funds, their view was that further work was required to clarify the position. The auditor advised that, technically, the Union had been holding the funds as agent for the University and suggested that clarification should be sought, potentially including legal advice, to determine whether the funds should be returned to the relevant students or could be treated as Union funds. The auditor suggested holding off on using the funds until this had been reviewed further.
 - 6.9 The auditor raised a point regarding nursery income, noting that income from non-students was already treated as taxable, but that the tax treatment of nursery income from students had not been formally reviewed. The auditor stated there was a risk that HMRC could view this income as commercial rather than charitable and could retrospectively assess tax for up to six years. The auditor recommended that a review be undertaken to establish the correct position and noted that, if the income were found to be taxable, there were potential structural options available, subject to advice.
 - 6.10 A question from an absent Trustee was shared regarding the audit qualification

and how this would be addressed in future audits. The auditor reiterated that the qualification was technical in nature, arising from not attending the July 2024 stock take. The auditor confirmed that they attended the stock take at 31 July 2025 and that, while the prior-year comparative would still be referenced, the current year audit would not be qualified on this basis.

- 6.11 The Chair thanked the auditor for attending the meeting and for the overview of the audit findings.

7.0 Chief Executive Updates

- 7.1 The Board received a verbal update from the Chief Executive, including confirmation that the Student Voice Coordinator had left the organisation, with their last working week noted.
- 7.2 The Chief Executive stated that financial pressures and grant reductions meant the organisation would need to focus on managing workloads and expectations, rather than reducing staff numbers.
- 7.3 It was stated that management accounts and budget meetings with budget holders were coming up, and that this would give a clearer picture of the financial position ahead of reforecasting in January.
- 7.4 In response to a question, it was noted that the NUS-related investigation remained pending and an update would be sought.

8.0 Sabbatical Officers Updates

- 8.1 Trustees received updates from Sabbatical Officers.
- 8.2 It was reported that a recent round of interviews for student representatives had taken place and that student representatives were now in post. It was noted that, beyond attending meetings, there had been limited additional activity to report at this stage.
- 8.3 It was noted that Starr was unable to attend the Trustee Board meeting due to delivering the second community kitchen event of the semester. It was explained that this initiative involved cooking free warm meals for students and providing space to discuss community issues, with the second event taking place on the day of the meeting.
- 8.4 An update was provided on liberation and welfare activity. It was reported that the GARA Fund, which provides funding of up to £2500 per application, with a maximum pot of £20,000, for projects supporting Black students, alumni, and the local Lewisham community, had undergone updates to its eligibility criteria. Trustees noted that these updates had been completed and the fund had recently been launched for this academic year on the website.

- 8.5 Trustees were informed that, in late September, four students evacuated from Gaza had been welcomed, with a further student arriving earlier in the same week as the meeting. It was reported that, working closely with the University, officers attended the airport to support arrivals, assisted students to their accommodation, ensured they had essential items, and supported enrolment and admissions processes. It was noted that, with support from UCU and other student groups, funds had been raised to support these students during their initial months.
- 8.6 An update was provided on accessibility improvements. It was reported that a stair lift had been installed on the day of the meeting, following work by the Sabbatical officers and the Disabled Students' Officer. Trustees were also informed that an accessible fire exit from the Students' Union café area had been completed over the summer, and this had recently been confirmed.
- 8.7 Trustees were informed that the first Liberation Committee meeting involving part-time officers was scheduled for the following day. It was noted that, out of six part-time officer roles, three were currently filled. Trustees were informed that no candidates had stood in recent by-elections and that one part-time officer had resigned earlier in the year, citing the unpaid nature of the role and time commitments after receiving initial training.

9.0 University Position and Key Updates for Trustees

- 9.1 Trustees received an update on developments at the University, including the Vice Chancellor stepping down with immediate effect and the appointment of an Interim Vice Chancellor. It was noted that the University was forecasting a deficit linked to student recruitment challenges, particularly overseas recruitment, and that governance structures were undergoing change following a review.
- 9.2 Sector-wide developments were outlined, including regulatory focus on student experience, continuation, and TEF-related changes, and potential implications for the University and Students' Union.

10.0 Commercial Report and Welcome Week

- 10.1 Trustees received the Commercial report and a verbal update on Welcome Week activity.
- 10.2 It was reported that, although overall student numbers were lower and students had less disposable income, resulting in reduced footfall and income, the commercial team had worked hard to control costs, which meant the organisation was still generating a surplus. It was noted that the first months of the academic year were particularly important for income generation and that tighter cost control would be required later in the year.
- 10.3 Trustees were informed that Welcome Week activity was delivered under challenging circumstances, including the Welcome Fair being moved from the

usual Saturday to a Friday due to changes in student arrival patterns and venue availability. It was reported that attendance was steady throughout the day rather than peaking at specific times, and that external vendors were positioned within the Students' Union building, which supported student engagement with both the vendors and the Union space. It was also reported that a large sabbatical-led social event ran alongside the Welcome Fair with strong attendance, and that SU staff were present at all University academic inductions, increasing visibility and engagement with new students.

- 10.4 Trustees heard that, while a full written report and analysis of feedback was still to be completed, the delivery of Welcome Week was considered effective given the constraints, and the significant effort of the staff team in delivering activity in a compressed timeframe was acknowledged.

11.0 Constitution Update

- 11.1 Trustees received an update on constitutional amendments previously approved by the Trustee Board and University Council. It was reported that amendments to the Objects clause had been submitted to the Charity Commission for approval and that confirmation was awaited before progressing remaining changes to a General Meeting of Members.

12.0 Strategy Project Update - Strategy Feedback Plan 2025/26

- 12.1 Trustees received a verbal update on the proposed Strategy project, supported by a paper previously circulated.
- 12.2 It was explained that, unlike the previous strategy which had been largely staff-led and developed during the period following Covid when there was limited student presence, the intention for this strategy was to be much more student-focused and informed by direct engagement. It was stated that the University was currently in a transitional position with a number of projects and priorities, and that this created potential opportunities for the Students' Union to identify gaps where it could take on activity or projects that aligned with student needs, potentially strengthening the Union's position with the University and, where possible, supporting bids for additional funding.
- 12.3 The proposed approach was outlined in phases across the academic year, with the autumn term focused on initial research, understanding the current student body, and reviewing what other students' unions and sector organisations were doing, including informal discussions with peers at other institutions.

The spring term would focus more heavily on student engagement and feedback, recognising that this period coincides with elections and higher levels of student engagement, with planned conversations to better understand what students know about the Union, what they value, what they would like us to do differently, and what matters most to them.

The summer term would then focus on deeper engagement with University teams, understanding their priorities and ongoing work, and identifying where the Union could contribute or collaborate, before bringing this together into a draft strategy. It was stated that trustees would be involved at a later stage to provide feedback once the initial work had been completed, and that this work would be a significant focus for the year, supported by senior staff.

- 12.4 It was emphasised that this would not be a closed process led only by senior staff, but would involve sabbatical officers, staff, and trustees, and would seek to connect student engagement activity to wider institutional priorities such as student retention and experience.
- 12.5 Trustees present indicated approval, and it was noted that trustees not in attendance would be contacted separately to provide visibility and input.

13.0 Risk Register

- 13.1 Trustees received a verbal update on the risk register.
- 13.2 An update was highlighted in relation to business continuity, with work ongoing to address the relevant risks and mitigation actions. No additional questions or comments were raised at this stage.

14.0 Trustee Board Meeting Dates

- 14.1 Trustees were advised that the next scheduled Trustee Board meeting on 10 December 2025 would need to be moved due to multiple calendar clashes. An alternative date of Monday 15 December 2025, at approximately 18:00, was proposed.
- 14.2 Trustees present were asked to indicate availability. Those present confirmed that the proposed date and time were suitable. It was noted that Trustees not in attendance would be contacted separately to confirm availability, and that the meeting date would be confirmed on the basis of majority availability.

15.0 AOB

- 15.1 **ESG Policy and Pay (London Living Wage)**

Trustees were informed that, following review of the ESG policy approved in July, it had been identified that the policy states the organisation will pay the London Living Wage, whereas current practice is to pay the Living Wage. It was acknowledged that this discrepancy represented an oversight rather than deliberate non-compliance. It was stated that the organisation was not acting unlawfully.
- 15.1.1 Trustees were reminded of the current financial context, including a reported

deficit of approximately £25,000 and a reduction in grant funding, and it was stated that this meant implementation of the London Living Wage was not currently financially achievable. Trustees were advised that further information would be circulated outlining student staff pay levels and providing reassurance regarding current arrangements.

15.1.2 It was stated that the intention was to factor the London Living Wage into future budget planning, with this work beginning in early 2026 as part of the next budgeting cycle. Trustees were informed that no decision was required at this stage and that the update was provided for information and assurance only.

15.2 **Trustees Only AOB Item**
[REDACTED – Closed Session]

End of Meeting