UCP COUNCIL – PART 1 MINUTES

25th June 2026
4:30 PM - 6:30 PM
Online

ATTENDANCE

PRESENT

Sameena Aziz	
Matthew Bradbury	
Jaki Bradley	*(Left after item 8)*
Cory Brook	
Alison Davies	
David Dixon	*(From Item 3)*
Les Ebdon	**Chair**
Tony Keeling	
Raghav Kovurri	
Rachel Nicholls	
Peter Walker	
Mark Woods	

IN ATTENDANCE

Emma Graham	
Helen Johns	
Jemma Leggetter	*(Item 2 only)*
Jane Spurgin	
James Whybrow	
Sarah Young	

APOLOGIES

Anna Gosh
Alex Owen

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

(a) **Welcome and Apologies for absence:** The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and received apologies from Anna Gosh, Dan Lee and Alex Owen. The Council asked that their very best wishes be sent to Dan Lee for his recovery **(ACTION 1)**.

(b) **Eligibility, quorum and declarations of interest:** No new notice had been received of any Member becoming ineligible to hold office, the meeting was quorate and no new interests were declared.

(c) **Requests for urgent business:** UCP Alumni – discussed at Item 2.

2. GOVERNOR PRESENTATION: WIDENING PARTICIPATION - THE NEACO PROJECT

The HE Customer Service and Student Finance Manager gave a presentation to the UCP Council Members on Widening Participation and the NEACO project. The Network for East Anglian Collaborative Outreach (NEACO) is a partnership of local universities and colleges working under the national Uni Connect programme. Launched in 2017, the initiative provides targeted support to students in Years 11 to 13 who live in areas with historically low rates of progression to higher education, helping them explore future academic pathways and reach their full potential.
(Slides shared with Members on TeamEngine)

Following the presentation the following matters were discussed:

- Governors commended the impact of the initiative, particularly its role in supporting student progression from Level 3 qualifications. The Council discussed the importance of refining conversion metrics and noted that work is underway to secure additional regional data to enrich tracking and student intelligence.
- Members explored potential progression barriers, including geography, mature learner demographics, and "cold-spot" postcodes. Management highlighted targeted outreach initiatives aimed at parents, and Governors offered to share community contacts to expand this impact.
- The Council reviewed future funding forecasts, noting a positive outlook for the upcoming year with less certainty regarding the following year. Members also discussed the operational requirement to maintain a neutral, unbiased approach when guiding local college students toward regional higher education pathways.

Alumni update

Following review at the Academic Board, management is finalising a launch of a structured alumni network and multi-tiered award system tied to graduation, utilising summer data tracking and student skills scans to better capture learner journeys, encourage long-term institutional loyalty, and celebrate alumni success stories.

Governor DD to be briefed and invited to share his experiences at Loughborough **(ACTION 2)**.

3. MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

(a) Minutes of the last meeting (18.03.26): The Minutes of the previous meeting were approved for signature **(ACTION 3)**
(b) Matters arising from the minutes: None
(c) Action tracker: Members received the progress on action points, noting those in progress and those that are closed. Members received an update on the following:

Action 5 - MIS Update: HE-dedicated data resources are in place, with work underway over the summer to develop new performance dashboards.
Action 6 - EDI Statement: Management will align the 2026/27 EDI statement with the Access and Participation Plan (APP) to ensure a more targeted focus.

The Council received and accepted the contents of the following minutes:

- IEG Audit Committee (draft 20.05.26) – the Audit Committee chair highlighted the different approach to risk proposal and that potentially sensitive items are moved to the confidential section.
- HE Academic Board (draft - 22.05.26) Amendment required at Item 6 - Lincoln Bishop University **(ACTION 4)**
- IEG Search & Governance Committee (draft - 12.06.26)

4. HE STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE REPORT

The HE Student Representative, provided a report on the HE Student Voice and Engagement. Members noted the following points:

- *Student Leadership Succession:* Helen Johns has been ratified as the new Student Officer, and Ruta Jasaityte appointed as Deputy Student Officer following a student-led panel process.
- *Staffing Continuity and Service Delivery:* concerns around recent staff turnover with projections on potential impact to Student Experience and cascading elements.

Management reassured the Council that providing exceptional student support remains the absolute priority. Robust contingency plans and operational reviews are underway over the summer to ensure service continuity, with regular progress updates to be provided directly to the Chair **(ACTION 5).**

Members stressed how important it is to them that the student voice is heard in the UCP Council and welcomed all issues, which can be raised and openly discussed.

On behalf of the Council, the Chair thanked the outgoing HE Student Representative for his excellent contribution to UCP.

5. UCP DASHBOARD AND KPIS

The Council reviewed the updated Key Performance Indicator (KPI) report. The discussion focused on financial performance and risk, student recruitment and progression, student satisfaction and people and operation.

Noting that the position has changed very little since the March KPI report, the Council received the report.

6. HIGHER EDUCATION REPORT

The Council received report from the Vice Principal Apprenticeships & HE and considered the following key points:

- *Institutional Performance and Operational Readiness:* UCP's strong performance, highlighted by excellent student retention and student satisfaction rates. To manage late-cycle recruitment fluidity, management has introduced targeted transition initiatives and an updated marketing strategy.
- *Regulatory Compliance:* Progress remains on track for the Lifelong Learning Entitlement (LLE) rollout. Furthermore, key policies have been robustly updated to ensure proactive compliance with evolving OfS frameworks regarding Free Speech, Consumer Protection, and corporate governance.

- *Academic Governance Enhancements:* proposed structural and membership changes to the academic committees. These enhancements refine committee memberships to guarantee active representation across all sector areas and formally synchronise the Academic Standards and Quality Committee (ASQC) schedule with corporate Curriculum Performance Reviews to strengthen quality assurance.
- *Academic Board:* The Council received assurance that the autonomy of the Academic Board is preserved and clarified that the committee memberships referred to relate to sub-committees of the Academic Board.

The Council **approved** the proposed structural changes to the academic committees and **congratulated** staff on the continuing run of validations/re-validations.

7. POLICY UPDATES

The Council **considered** and **approved** the recommended changes to the following policies, presented in response to recent developments and changes coming through from the OfS, recent management changes and also those subject to annual review.

FIN001 Higher Education Tuition Fee Policy
FRE001 Higher Education Academic Freedom of Speech and External Speaker Policy
SPP001 Higher Education Student Protection Policy

(ACTION 6)

8. UCP FINANCE REPORTS

The IEG Group Finance Director presented the UCP finance reports and Members considered the Period 9 Management Accounts, noting that the reported position has not varied much from that reported at Period 6 and that a large amount of work has been undertaken to reduce costs wherever possible. The latest position was **noted.**

With the agreement of the Council, discussions on the draft UCP 3 Year Financial Plan were moved to the confidential section

9. UCP FINANCIAL REGULATIONS 2026/27

The Council noted that the annual review of the UCP Financial Regulations has been undertaken and the updated document was provided for review. The document forms an important part of UCP's regulatory framework and aligns to the wider group framework.

Having considered that there are no significant changes in the UCP Financial Regulations proposed and only minor wording amendments/ updates to postholder titles to reflect the new management arrangements, the Council **approved** the UCP Financial Regulations 2026/27 **(ACTION 7).**

10. ANNUAL COMPLAINTS & COMPLIMENTS REPORT 2025/26

The Annual Complaints and Compliments Report 2025/26 was presented highlighting exceptional regulatory compliance and a consistently positive student experience. Members **welcomed** the encouraging report, **noting** the successful resolution of all complaints and positive feedback for teaching staff.

The Council also formally **endorsed** the strategic priorities outlined for 2026/27 and **thanked** Academic Office Manager for the report.

11. UCP RISK REPORT

Members reviewed the strategic and operational risk landscape for UCP, noting updates to the Board Assurance Framework (BAF) and the Contingency Risk Register. The discussion covered the following points:

- noted the updated Contingency Risk Register, noting a shift toward active mitigations. Management agreed to correct minor clerical errors and refine the wording to ensure risks are clearly distinguished from outcomes;
- the need to split complex risks into more precise indicators, specifically regarding recruitment and macro-political uncertainties surrounding the Government's current Access reviews;
- move towards streamlining Council oversight by focusing on the top five strategic risks, in line with the new risk review proposals considered recently by the Audit Committee. Member MB offered to work with management on this approach;
- Management confirmed that future reporting will shift to the Board Assurance Framework (BAF) only to align with the IEG Board practice **(ACTION 8)**.

12. UCP COUNCIL GOVERNANCE MATTERS

The Council received and discussed a report updating Members on a range of governance issues covering governor attendance, governor appointments; annual appointment of UCP Audit Committee members, plans for UCP Council Self-Assessment Report 2025/26, review of governance documentation, mandatory training compliance, the Annual Schedule of Business 2026/27, the governor link scheme and the calendar of meetings for 2026/27.

Members discussed whether to include a dedicated AI item at future meetings, concluding that the topic should mature further before becoming a standing agenda item. Management confirmed that an internal workstream focusing on the ethical use of AI is currently being established and that the UCP Council staff member is joining that group to bring specific HE knowledge to the discussions.

Members also noted that the Governor Link arrangements for 2026/27 are being refreshed.

The Council noted the issues covered within the governance update and approved the following, to:

- appoint Mark Woods, Matthew Bradbury and Alison Davies for a third term of office from July 2026;
- appoint Tony Keeling for a second term of office, backdated to March 2026;
- appoint Peter Walker and Mark Woods to the Audit Committee for 2026/27;
- approve the Annual Schedule of Business 2026/27.

As some meeting dates proposed were not suitable for some Members, new dates for the calendar of UCP Council meetings 2026/27 will be circulated for approval **(ACTION 9)**.

13. URGENT BUSINESS (RELATES TO ITEM 1C)

Alumni discussed at Item 2
The Chair requested that management send an indication of how results are going to Council members over the summer **(ACTION 10).**

The remaining agenda item was considered under the Confidential Section.