MINUTES

Board/Committee	:	Governing Authority
Meeting	:	Meeting M25-7
Venue	:	Boardroom, GLISB
Date	:	3 July 2025
Attendance:		June Arnold (MST); Donal Donovan; Catherine Duffy (MST); Síofra Foley: Kevin Fleming (MST); Ann Marie Kennedy (MST); Lucy Edith Kiiza; Shane Kilcommins (MST); Brigid Laffan (Chair); Ann Ledwith; Edmond Magner (MST); Aibhlín McCrann (MST); Anne O'Connor; Sinéad O'Flanagan; Orlagh O'Regan; Bob Strunz
Apologies	:	Mark Southern
In Attendance	:	Ciara Hogan; Siobhán Scanlon; John Field; John Kelly; Mahdi Nohtani; Pat O'Neill.

1. MEETING WITHOUT MEMBERS OF EXECUTIVE PRESENT

1.1 NOTED The Governing Authority (GA) met without members of the Executive or the Secretariat present, as required under the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies.

2. GENERAL

2.1 Welcome

2.1.1 NOTED The Chancellor welcomed Mr Mahdi Nohtani, the incoming President of the Postgraduate Students' Union (PSU) who was in attendance at the meeting and will be taking up his new role in August. The Chancellor wished him well and looks forward to working with Mr Nohtani as a new member of the GA in the year ahead.

2.1.2 NOTED The Chancellor bid farewell to Ms Lucy Kiiza the current President, PSU who was attending her final meeting. The Chancellor acknowledged Lucy's exceptional leadership over the past year and, on behalf of the GA, expressed gratitude for her contribution to the PSU at the University. All members extended their best wishes to Lucy for continuing success in her future career.

2.1.3 NOTED The Chancellor extended a welcome back to Ms Síofra Foley, attending the meeting in her new role as President of Student Life. She also welcomed Ms Orlagh O'Regan to her first meeting as GA member in her new position of Deputy President for Student Life and Welfare. The Chancellor wished them every success in their new roles and their work with the GA in the coming year.

3. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

3.1 NOTED The Corporate Secretary requested members to declare if they had a conflict of interest arising in relation to any matters on the agenda. Mr Mahdi Nohtani will step out of the meeting for the Maher Report, Agenda item 5.

4. MINUTES & ACTION ITEMS

4.1 AGREED Minutes of M25-5 27 of May with one addition proposed by Mr John Kelly, Corporate Secretary.

4.2 AGREED Proposed redline redactions of minutes of M25-5 29 April 2025 and M25-6 27 May 2025 for publishing on the University website, as previously circulated.

4.3 NOTED Document entitled “Sixth Governing Authority Action Items to 3 July 2025 Meeting”, previously circulated.

5. ATTENDANCE OF MR WILLIAM MAHER, BL

5.1 NOTED Documentation entitled “Review of Protected Disclosure Governance including Structures, Practices and Procedures at the University of Limerick”, by Mr William Maher BL, dated 28 April 2025 and “Letter to John Kelly re Maher Report”, dated 5 June 2025, previously circulated. Mr Bobby O’Connor, Director of HR (DHR) was in attendance. Professor Edmond Magner dialled in remotely for this discussion.

5.2 NOTED The Chancellor provided members with a briefing on this very significant report presented to the GA. She outlined how she intended to deal with the agenda item and members were satisfied to proceed with the discussion. Mr Maher then joined the meeting via MS Teams. The Chancellor advised that all members had read the report in detail, and requested he focus on the key elements, highlighting the main issues and concerns as he saw them.

5.3 NOTED Mr Maher expressed his thanks for the opportunity to address the GA an extended his appreciation to all who participated in and supported his work. He noted that the feedback he received was very positive. In particular, he acknowledged the support provided by the Corporate Secretary, Mr John Kelly, and his colleague, Ms Siobhán Scanlon, especially in facilitating access to the necessary documentation, dealing with queries, etc.

5.4 NOTED Mr Maher emphasised that his involvement was marked by deep engagement and willingness to examine the underlying issues that led the University to its current position. The whole objective was to assess the effectiveness of procedures and their application, looking at the issues from multiple perspectives.

5.5 NOTED Mr Maher confirmed he is satisfied that the executive summary sets out the key issues for the HEA and the GA. The review focused significantly on the importance of trust and organisational culture, which is where many of the issues have arisen.

5.6 NOTED Mr Maher advised that at the relevant time it is clear that there was a culture of mistrust, both amongst persons investigating Protected Disclosures (PD) and even amongst members of PD groups who were responsible for overseeing or managing them. He described the issue as multifaceted. There was certainly a view amongst some members that the process was being weaponised. This sentiment was shared by both senior management and reporting persons. Mr Maher emphasised that this concern arose on multiple occasions during his work.

5.7 NOTED Mr Maher noted that there was a lack of consistent understanding of what constitutes a PD. While some individuals demonstrated advanced knowledge of the law and the legal process, others lacked clarity which led to complications for reporting persons at later stages. A PD he highlighted, is not defined by formality, or by form-filling but by substance, even informal disclosures (e.g. a conversation in a car park to management) is every bit a PD as those that come through an official process. He stressed that this is not an issue unique to the University, but part of a broader national learning that needs to be addressed.

5.8 NOTED Mr Maher acknowledged that management and the GA must recognise the full meaning and implications of a PD. One of the most important recommendations is to recognise the substance of a PD over its form. It was emphasised that any potential PD, regardless of how it is presented, should be appropriately identified and directed through the correct channels. This issue formed the part of a broader set of discussions and was recognised as a key area requiring attention and improvement.

5.9 NOTED Mr Maher identified one of the main issues as the failure of the existing PD Policy to properly support individuals who turned to it in difficult circumstances. In his view, the policy did not provide the necessary level of support or guidance required, either for reporting persons or for PD groups responsible for handling disclosures. He also referred to published statistics, showing that UL was an outliner in terms of volume of PDs made during the period which he was assigned to review. He also identified both actual and perceived conflicts of interest noting that the policy provided no guidance in this area. Nor did the policy address the issue of unconscious bias, which is often a factor in such matters.

5.10 NOTED Mr Maher noted that his review revealed a broad spectrum of approaches, ranging from genuine bona fide attempts to follow the policy, to instances where there was a clear absence of self-reflection regarding the composition of particular groups. It was emphasised how it is important these issues are if there is to be confidence in the PD process.

5.11 NOTED Mr Maher emphasised the need for clear guidance on the independence of investigators involved in the PD process. He noted how measures such as the obtaining independent legal advice could help remove ambiguity and alleviate difficulties in what can be a tense environment. Mr Maher was conscious that his involvement and recommendations could be viewed as overly prescriptive, with the potential to make the PD Policy unwieldy. He endeavoured to balance the need for UL to maintain responsibility for managing disclosures but given what occurred there is also a need to introduce some independence. This will help to rebuild confidence in both the process and the policy.

5.12 NOTED Mr Maher in conclusion acknowledged that the certain elements of the University's experience are not unique, but others were concerning. He explained that the University should view PDs as an opportunity, rather than as a threat or a challenge. PDs present an opportunity for organisations to learn more about themselves. He emphasised that a well-constituted policy should enable individuals to speak up, allow for sensitive information to be handled appropriately, and ensure that those who make disclosures do not suffer detriment or consequences as a result. Over

time, he suggested, a process should be gradually embedded that leads to a more positive and constructive approach to PDs.

5.13 NOTED The Chancellor thanked Mr Maher for his briefing and all his work that went into the report.

5.14 [redacted]

- [redacted]
- [redacted]
- [redacted]
- [redacted]
- The positive engagement with the University was welcomed. The report was commended as very comprehensive and that the detailed recommendations would prove very useful.
- [redacted].

5.15 NOTED The Chancellor thanked Mr Maher on behalf of the University for his work and affirmed the University's commitment to acting seriously on the findings and to implement a best-in-class approach to PDs. She emphasised that PDs should be seen as opportunities for learning, not threats. She further stated that the cultural transformation should aim to create an environment where staff feel comfortable raising serious issues without needing to resort to formal PDs. She expressed

confidence that the report would significantly contribute to institutional transformation. Mr Maher left the meeting.

5.16 NOTED The Chancellor set out a number of comments on the report that included:

- The Maher Report is acknowledged as stark.
- The policies and processes around PDs fell short of the standards expected in a well-functioning institution. She believes that the report now represents a crucial element to the broader cultural transformation which must now occur.
- The GA need to formally confront the findings and take a clear position on whether to accept them. There was consensus that the mishandling of PDs over a sustained period must be condemned in the strongest possible terms, particularly the failure to protect individuals who came forward.
- It was her intention, if the GA agrees that she would issue formal apologies to individuals who were adversely affected. She expressed a strong desire to acknowledge the concerns raised and to make amends, to those who suffered.
- It was accepted that a major task lies ahead in rebuilding trust in the PD process and to separate out the legacy issues from the report's recommendations, that this never happens again.
- The recommendations will be discussed again by GA in September with a view to agreeing the approach to implementation. There will also need to be engagement with the HEA on this via the S.64 implementation process.

5.17 NOTED The Chancellor addressed the individuals who were most grievously affected by the mishandling of PDs that included:

[redacted]

[redacted]

5.18 AGREED To defer follow-up actions and implementation planning on the Maher Report until the September meeting of the GA. The report excluding the sample PD scenarios

will be shared with the wider University community, following legal review. The expected release date is September 2025.

5.19 AGREED To formally accept the Maher Report as presented.

5.20 NOTED Discussion that included the following Acting President's comments:

- The importance of how the University now manages and responds to the report was emphasised. Reflecting on the past events, it is essential that there is an appropriate governance and human resources response so that reporting persons remain safe while matters of concern are being reviewed and/or investigated.
- [redacted]

- [redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

- [redacted]
- [redacted]
- [redacted]
- [redacted]
- [redacted]
- [redacted]
- [redacted]

[redacted]

- [redacted]
- [redacted]
- [redacted]
- [redacted]

[redacted]

5.26 NOTED Professor Magner and Ms Kennedy left and Mr Nohtani rejoined the meeting.

6. STUDENT RECORD SYSTEM

6.1 NOTED Documents from the Interim PDP entitled “ATOM Memo to GA”, dated 3 July 2025, “Academic Transformation Operating Model (ATOM) project, Initial Scoping Phase - Benchmarking Report”, dated 27 May 2025, “ATOM Initial Scoping Phase - Focus Group Report”, dated 12 June 2025 and “Academic Transformation Operating Model (ATOM), Initial Scoping - End of Phase Update - June 2025”, previously circulated.

6.2 NOTED Ms Clare O’Shaughnessy, Director of Academic Registry and Mr Liam O’Reilly, Director Information Technology Division (ITD), joined the meeting.

6.3 NOTED The Interim PDP provided members with a status update of the end of the initial scoping phase of the ATOM project. Progress has been made across key goals and objectives. A summary of key findings from the focus groups and benchmarking activities completed to date and their conclusions from this initial round of stakeholder engagement was provided. The Steering Group’s view of the likely scope of the ATOM programme at this stage and a summary of some continuous improvement opportunities have emerged and are under consideration. A summary of the key tasks

and outputs of the full scoping phase, including a high-level plan to formally close out this phase of the project was noted.

6.4 NOTED Discussion including the following:

- The Interim PDP informed members how the benchmarking conducted allowed for a broader look at other Universities and how they manage their processes.
- The second phase is much more detailed and has a large number of interrelated parts in how it has been designed and interacting.
- The importance of the project team consisting of subject matter experts.
- The communications and engagements around the initial phase were extremely important and work is still ongoing on the guiding principles and will be completed during the full scoping phase.
- The tightening of the expected schedule of steps within the phases increase the level of possible error.
- One member expressed concern on the expected time frame and believes 2/3 years should be considered.
- The Interim PDP informed members they are looking at a three-year cycle and are still in the planning phase and wants to be in a position where all sections of the plan progress together at same point.
- Accountability is critical with staff required to take responsibility and understand decisions are final. [redacted]
- Previous recommendations that are not yet addressed are being included.
- There are elements that can be fixed in both the short and long term.

6.5 AGREED The final slide of the Interim PDP presentation to be issued to ARC for their information.

7. SPECIAL REVIEW OF AWARDS PROCESS

7.1 NOTED Documents entitled, “Special Review of Awards”, by Corporate Secretary, Head, Internal Audit and Risk Management Officer, dated 3 July 2025, “Internal Audit Review IA 2025 Special Review of Awards Part One”, and dated 3 July 2025, “Risk Incident Report” and “Root Cause Analysis Report" dated 25 June 2025.

7.2 NOTED The Chair of the ARC briefed members on the high-level report concerning previously notified issues, specifically that seven students had received incorrect award classifications. The Chair confirmed that the issue arose due to human intervention, not system failure. The recommendations within the report were detailed, and he acknowledged the importance of implementing them as soon as feasible.

7.3 NOTED Two separate governance processes were initiated in response to the issue:

- Audit: A special review of the awards process was conducted by Internal Audit. The review focused on the controls identified in the award and exam board process flow and consider any further incidences where incorrect award has been granted, the root cause of the failure in the process and report out on recommendations.
- Risk – A risk incidence review was conducted by the Risk Management Officer.

7.4 NOTED These reports address the awards process as identified in both the Risk Incident Report and the Special Review Report dated 3 July 2025. The alignment of

findings and recommendations ensures a cohesive understanding and response to the issue across risk and audit functions. Ongoing monitoring and follow-up actions will be coordinated through the Audit & Risk Committee, ensuring that both risk and audit perspectives are integrated into the resolution process.

7.5 NOTED Discussion included the following:

- Members noted the heavy workload on coordinators of large programmes and agreed support measures should be explored.
- Alternative practices in other institutions were acknowledged.
- In-person participation at Exam Boards has been beneficial.
- The Director ITD confirmed that the current system remains viable and provided additional context on the status of the current supplier and the forthcoming decision on future provision. There is no presumption the current supplier must remain in place. However, it was also acknowledged that transitioning to a new system with a different vendor would constitute a major project for UL.
- Process design and simplification must precede any system decision.
- A clear operating model is needed to guide future decisions and ensure integration with UL processes.
- The priority must be to first design and streamline the necessary processes. Only then should a decision be made regarding the most suitable system provider.

7.6 AGREED To accept the 1) Special Review of the Awards Part One, 2) Risk Incident Report and 3) Root Cause Analysis Report and for the Risk Incident Review and Internal Audit Review Report to be discussed further by the Executive Committee and for the outcome of this discussion to be reported back in September.

7.7 AGREED For the distribution of the Risk Incident Review Report and the Internal Audit Review Report to DFHERIS, HEA & QQI.

7.8 NOTED Ms O'Shaughnessy and Mr O'Reilly left the meeting.

8. ACTING PRESIDENT'S REPORT

8.1 NOTED Document entitled "Acting President's Report to GA, 3 July 2025, previously circulated. A briefing by the Acting President included the following:

- **S64 Renewal Plan & Validation:** HEA feedback from June meeting stressed the need for external validation of KPIs before the next report in September. UL is preparing to engage a provider.
- **Culture Workshop:** Mandatory Dignity & Respect training underway; Values & Behaviours Questionnaire closed with feedback expected.
- **Rankings:** UL ranked 401 globally in QS 2026 and remains in the top 3% in THE Impact Rankings, second in Ireland.
- **TRUST–EM Project:** Successfully implemented with 38% student engagement across 1,200 modules. Next steps include refining policies and expanding participation.
- **Healthy UL Framework 2025–2027:** New framework launched with focus on systems, engagement, and environments. UL to host IHPCC.
- **Digital Transformation Award:** UL and ITD won Best Public Sector Project for cloud and security innovations.

- **Academic Recruitment:** Two committees progressing strategic recruitment initiatives. Open call for new academic posts planned for September.
- **Executive Deans on Panels:** Deans confirmed commitment to uphold recruitment standards—noted as an action item.
- **Global Engagement:** Updates included EUF conference, overseas recruitment, CWELL, and internationalisation efforts.
- **Faculty Update:** Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences update noted.

8.2 NOTED Members commended the progress on Healthy UL and campus wellbeing initiatives.

9. STUDENT RELATED REPORTS

9.1 Student Life Report

9.1.1 NOTED Document entitled the "Report of UL Student Life for the Governing Authority," authored by Síofra Foley and Orlagh O'Regan, 3 July 2025. The President of Student Life thanked the GA for their support and introduced new Student Life members. Key updates included summer planning, exam results support, and ongoing collaboration with Academic Registry to improve student communications. Financial concerns remain a consistent issue. The Advice Team is relocating to the new student centre. UL Student Life won the 2025 Sockie Gold Award for Best TikTok, following a 2024 win for Best Instagram.

9.2 Postgraduate Students' Union Report

9.2.1 NOTED Document entitled "Report from UL Postgraduate Students' Union to Governing Authority, 3 July 2025 – authored and presented by Lucy Edith Kiiza, President, ULPSU". The PSU President summarised key achievements, including increased visibility, student support initiatives (e.g. Breakfast Scheme, exam meal vouchers), national advocacy, leadership elections, accommodation support, and over 50 events reaching 3,325 students. Key issues for 2024–2025 include financial stress, isolation, safety concerns, PhD challenges, and the need for improved student support and handover processes. Ms Kiiza thanked the GA and UL stakeholders for their support during her term.

10. PEOPLE & CULTURE

10.1 NOTED Mr Bobby O'Connor, Director of Human Resources (DHR) joined the meeting and provided an update on the current Culture Transformation Project. Phase one is nearing completion, having included a successful World Café event, a campus-wide survey, drop-in sessions, and a half-day workshop facilitated by Mazars. The team is now synthesising the feedback received and will present a roadmap at the next meeting, marking the transition into the core transformation work. Progress is reported to be positive.

10.2 NOTED The Director, Human Resources left the meeting.

11. COMMITTEE REPORTS

11.1 Audit & Risk Committee (ARC)

11.1.1 NOTED Document entitled "Audit & Risk Committee, Chair's Report to the Governing Authority, 17 June 2025" and accompanying appendices, previously circulated.

11.1.2 NOTED The Chair, ARC, on behalf of the Committee, briefed the GA on the matters addressed in the report including:

- Annual Charities Regulator Return – recommended for approval and dealt with under Item 23;
- Appointment of External Auditor for year ended 30 September 2025 to 2028 – recommended for approval and dealt with under Item 19;
- Non-Audit Services Policy – recommended for approval and dealt with under Item 24;
- Depreciation policy on capitalised IT assets;
- Section 64 Review Update;
- Student Records Update - ATOM Project, - Exam Board & Award Process;
- Update Internal Audit Update - Consent Framework Review, - Cyber Security Review and Special Review: Exam Board and Awards Process;
- Risk Management Update – Fundamental Risk Register recommended for approval and dealt with under Item 13;
- [redacted]
- Unijobs Briefing;
- Review of business continuity planning & disaster recovery;
- Concept paper on Honan's Quay Property;
- Update on Digital Governance Steering Committee (DGSC) & IT Developments;
- Bi-annual Reports - Health & Safety and Legal Cases;
- Quarterly Report - Procurement update;
- Research Audits;
- Approvals Thresholds;
- Meetings with the Risk Management Officer and Head, Internal Audit without Executive present.

11.1.3 NOTED Discussion whether large recurrent expenditure should be automatically approved. Further consideration is needed regarding how such expenditures are handled, including the potential for review by FSPC.

11.2 Finance, Strategy & Performance Committee (FSPC)

11.2.1 NOTED Document entitled "Chair's Report to the Governing Authority, 27 May 2025" and accompanying appendices, previously circulated. The Committee also met on 1 July 2025 to discuss Student Life which is dealt with separately under agenda item 15.

11.2.2 NOTED The Chair, FSPC, on behalf of the Committee, briefed the GA on the matters addressed in the Report including:

- Chair's Update;
- Budget Strategy 25/26 - recommended for approval and dealt with under Item 13;
- Fee rates 2026/27 - recommended for approval and dealt with under Item 14;

- Medium Term Financial Scenarios;
- Subsidiaries Timeframe;
- S64 Update.

11.3 People & Culture Committee (PC&C)

11.3.1 NOTED Document entitled "People and Culture Committee, Chair's Report to Governing Authority, 3 July 2025", previously circulated.

11.3.2 NOTED The Chair acknowledged the extremely helpful metrics from Human Resources that are provided in their reports.

11.3.3 AGREED The members of the PC&C to be provided with the Maher Report.

11.4 Campus Development Committee (CDC)

11.4.1 NOTED Documents entitled "CDC Report to GA June Informal Meeting ", dated 16 June 2025, "CDC Report to GA 1 July meeting", and CDC TOR V1.0 Final", date 1 July 2025, previously circulated.

11.4.2 NOTED The Chair briefed the members on her engagements with the ACCO. Finalising the terms of reference is seen as a key milestone for the Committee as some external members had voiced frustration with progress on the work of the Committee.

11.4.3 AGREED To approve the Campus Development Committee Terms of Reference as presented.

11.5 Nominating & Governing Committee (NGC)

11.5.1 NOTED There was no formal report from the NGC. However, the Chair provided an update on the first meeting, which took place on 2 July. The discussion included the self-evaluation of the GA and the upcoming requirement for an external evaluation.

11.5.2 NOTED The Chancellor highlighted the appointment campaign to the GA, coordinated via the Minister, and is currently advertised on publicjobs.ie. All members were encouraged to consider suitable individuals and to actively encourage them to apply. The closing date for applications is 7 July 2025. Further information and the application link are available on oneAdvanced.

12. APPOINTMENTS

12.1 Academic Staff Appointments

12.1.1 AGREED In accordance with Section 25(1) of the Universities Act, 1997 to appoint the following:

- [redacted] as Glucksman Chair (Full Professor) in Contemporary Writing in English on [redacted]
- [redacted] as Full Professor of History on [redacted]
- [redacted] as Chair (Full Professor) of Software Engineering on a [redacted]

- [redacted]hon as Head - Department of Psychology on five-[redacted]
- [redacted] as Clinical Tutor in Paediatrics UHL on a [redacted].
- [redacted] as Clinical Tutor in Paediatrics UHL on a [redacted]
- [redacted] as Clinical Tutor in Paramedic Studies on a [redacted]
- [redacted] as Associate Professor B in Cybersecurity on [redacted]
- [redacted] as Assistant Professor in Biomedical Engineering on a [redacted]
- [redacted] as Head Department of Electronic and Computer Engineering on [redacted]
- [redacted] as Assistant Professor in Statistics and Data Science on [redacted]
- [redacted] as Assistant Professor in Work and Employment on a [redacted]

12.2 **Support Staff Appointments**

12.2.1 AGREED In accordance with Section 25(1) of the Universities Act, 1997, the filling of the following staff posts:

[redacted]	Finance Business Partner
[redacted]	Head of Technical Services and Sustainability Manager
[redacted]	Smarter Travel Coordinator
[redacted]	Senior Technical Officer - School of Engineering (Biomedical)
[redacted]	Technical Officer - Materials Technology Engineering
[redacted]	Executive Administrator
[redacted]	EPS Category Specialist
[redacted]	EPS Category Specialist
[redacted]	EPS Category Specialist
[redacted]	Librarian, Collection Services
[redacted]	Laboratory Attendant
[redacted]	Strategic Development Manager – EHS
[redacted]	Chief Technical Officer - School of Architecture and Product Design
[redacted]	Learning Design Lead - Graduate and Professional Studies
[redacted]	Category Specialist Higher
[redacted]	Category Specialist Higher

12.3 NOTED Salary offer confirmations for May 2025.

12.4 NOTED Memorandum from the Director, Human Resources entitled “Notification of appointments”, dated 3 July 2025 which set out the appointments approved by GA online since the last meeting on 28 May 2025.

12.5 NOTED Research funded contract appointments for July 2025 as circulated.

13. RISK

13.1 NOTED Documentation "Memo to GA –Fundamental Risk Register Review"," Detail Report", "Fundamental Risk Register Review GA July 2025", previously circulated. Ms Patricia Bourke, Risk Management Officer (RMO) joined the meeting.

13.2 NOTED The Corporate Secretary briefed the members on the formal review of the Fundamental Risk Register (FRR) that was undertaken and approved by the EC on 14 May 2025. Testing of all controls listed on the FRR is currently underway. The RMO is engaging directly with each control owner to assess the design and operational effectiveness of controls. This process involves a detailed review where the control owner is required to demonstrate evidence that the control is operating as intended there were a number of key changes that arose from the review. These include several completed actions promoted to active controls, reflecting the strengthening the internal control environment since the previous review.

13.3 NOTED There were two significant changes arose from this review:
(1) FRR05 – Progression Rules and Academic Regulations The residual risk score increased from 9 to 12 due to concerns following the recent award classification issue, which highlighted systemic challenges in academic governance. While process improvements are underway, the risk remains elevated until full resolution is achieved.
(2) FRR06 – Financial Sustainability A proposed increase in the residual risk score from 12 to 16 reflects concerns about sustained financial pressures, including government funding constraints and reliance on non-core income streams.

13.4 NOTED The CFPO and Chair ARC discussed the financial sustainability risk score. Initially, the CFPO had considered increasing the inherent score to 16, taking into account all relevant factors. As the budget and medium-term financial scenarios were reviewed, concerns remained regarding the lack of guarantee around state pay awards. Given that these pay awards are outside the University's control, there is a risk of deficits, particularly in the context of efforts to adopt a sustainable budget.

13.5 AGREED To leave the FRR06 residual risk score at 12, given the University's substantive reserves and the extended timeframe available. This risk is less likely to impact within the next few months and it's suitable to be classified as a medium level risk.

13.6 AGREED To approve the Fundamental Risk Register.

13.7 NOTED The Chair ARC, acknowledged the work of the Risk Management Officer and the Executive Committee with regard to this review. The RMO left the meeting.

14. S64 REVIEW RECOVERY PLAN & IMPLEMENTATION

14.1 NOTED The Acting President provided an update on the progress of the University's Renewal Plan, highlighting developments across key structural components including the Steering Committee, Tracker System, and Transformation Office.

14.2 **Appointment of Validation Services**

14.2.1 NOTED Memorandum from Mr David Mangan, Renewal Programme Management Lead, entitled "UL1000 Mini-competition for Validation Services – Tender Update". Mr David Mangan, Renewal Programme Management Lead joined the meeting.

14.2.2 NOTED Mr Mangan briefed members on the HEA requirement for independent validation of the Renewal Plan. UL has initiated procurement for a third-party provider, aiming to have a solution in place by the HEA's next visit on 22 October 2025. The memo outlined proposed timelines for quarterly reports and validation submissions to the HEA.

14.2.3 NOTED Members sought clarity on the validation role and associated costs, emphasising the need to confirm HEA expectations before awarding the tender. The Chair of ARC noted such validations are common in other sectors.

14.2.4 NOTED Members agreed on the importance of robust validation as an investment in UL's future and assurance to the HEA. Mr Mangan left the meeting.

15. MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL SCENARIOS

15.1 NOTED Document entitled "Financial Scenarios 2025-26 to 2030-31", from the CFPO who was joined by Mr Declan Hannan, Financial Controller Management Planning & Reporting, Mr Eamonn Moran, Director of Strategic Planning, and Mr Sean Ryan, Programme Manager. Members received a presentation on five financial scenarios developed to assess potential future financial scenarios. These are based on varying assumptions regarding student numbers, state funding, and student mix, and aligned with previously presented strategic considerations.

15.2 NOTED The CFPO emphasised adjusting the student intake mix and enhancing state funding are critical strategies for achieving a financial surplus. These insights are intended to inform the development of UL's next strategic plan, particularly in guiding decisions around growth, investment, and resource allocation. The CFPO also highlighted the research underpinning these recommendations, which considered both national and international contexts. Additionally, UL's student mix was benchmarked against other IUA institutions and UK research-intensive universities to provide comparative insights.

15.3 [redacted]

16. BUDGET STRATEGY

16.1 NOTED Document "Final Budget 2025-26", dated 19 June 2025. The CFPO's briefing set out the proposed final consolidated budget including budget context, consolidated budget 25-26, recurrent budget 25/26, research, ancillary and subsidiary budgets.

16.2 The CFPO briefed the members on the key points that included:

- [redacted]

16.3 NOTED Discussion that included:

- FSPC input was incorporated into the revised budget.
- Discussion included support staff increases and their distribution across units.
- New units were created in response to regulatory demands, limiting flexibility.
- [redacted]
- Academic resource planning is being aligned with the Director of Strategic Planning's review.
- Suggested benchmarking against peer institutions, though recent data is limited.
- UL is not an outlier in academic pay; some institutions outsource certain functions.
- Staffing levels are generally tied to student numbers and income.
- Recent media coverage on student fee increases was acknowledged.

16.4 AGREED To approve the budget strategy 2025/26.

17. FEE RATES 2026/27

17.1 NOTED Memorandum from the CFPO entitled "Proposed Fee Rates 2026-27", dated 28 May 2025 by Declan Hannan and Leona Kelly, previously circulated.

17.2 AGREED To approve the proposed fee rates for 2026/27.

17.3 NOTE Mr Hannan, Mr Moran and Mr Ryan left the meeting.

18. STUDENT LIFE

18.1 NOTED Memorandum from the CFPO entitled "Student Life", dated and "Chair's Report, FSPC 1 July 2025, previously circulated.

18.2 NOTED The Chair of FSPC briefed members on recent issues concerning Student Life, noting the importance of FSPC involvement before escalating to the GA. [redacted]

[redacted]

18.3 NOTED The FSPC agreed a review is needed, with more frequent updates than the proposed quarterly reports. The inclusion of a UL Finance representative at Student Life meetings was discussed, with oversight measures to be in place by year-end. A communications plan was deemed important as part of the implementation process.

18.4 NOTED The Student Life President confirmed ongoing engagement with management, who are supportive of GA-led measures. The CFPO also briefed members, noting a meeting with Student Life leadership and the interim PDP, who stressed the seriousness of the situation.

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18.5 AGREED To approve proposed measures approved, subject to a review to understand root causes, implement remedial actions, and establish appropriate University oversight. The CFPO and Chair of ARC will define the review structure.

18.6 AGREED To develop a communications plan to manage potential reputational risks.

19. APPOINTMENT OF EXTERNAL AUDITOR

19.1 NOTED Memorandum entitled "Approval of award of External Audit Services Contract", dated 4 June 2025 from the Evaluation team and the PwC Tender Submission for Audit Services.

19.2 AGREED To approve the appointment of PwC as [redacted]ernal auditors at the University and its subsidiaries for a four-year period.

20. ACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOUR IN THE WORKPLACE POLICY

20.1 NOTED Memorandum from the DHR entitled "Acceptable Behaviour in the Workplace (motion to retire the policy)", dated 3 July 2025, previously circulated.

20.2 NOTED The DHR briefed the members on the proposed retirement of the Acceptable Behaviour in the Workplace Policy. The Policy's retirement was approved by the Executive Committee and is supported by Unite, subject to clear communication and a commitment to review should any issues arise.

20.3 AGREED To retire the Acceptable Behaviour in the Workplace Policy.

21. STAKEHOLDER MAP

21.1 NOTED Documentation from the Director of Marketing & Communications including a memorandum "UL Stakeholder map as per Section 64 recommendation #10", "University of Limerick Stakeholder documentation" and "University of Limerick Public Affairs Strategy 2025-2027" and "UL Stakeholder matrix visual aid". The Director of Marketing, Communications and Public Affairs, Ms Laura Ryan, joined the meeting via MS Teams and briefed members on the Stakeholder Map.

21.2 NOTED One member requested consideration of the EU Commission in line with the hierarchy of the stakeholders, with MEPs already included on the stakeholder matrix.

21.3 AGREED To approve the Stakeholder Map, pending inclusion of the EU Commission.

22. ACADEMIC COUNCIL REPORT

22.1 NOTED Document entitled "Academic Council Report to Governing Authority June 2025" and appendices. The Report including the following:

- Student Award and Recheck Process Update;
- Exam Board Controls;
- Award Regulations;
- Ratification of Examination Board Results;
- Appeal against decision of PhD Examination;
- ATOM Class Timetabling Project Update;
- Academic Calender Modifications;
- Meeting dates AY2025/36 and Delegation of Authority of Approval
- Academic Programme Review Committee (APRC);
- Review of Linked Provider Framework;
- Academic Regulations Committee;
- Handbook of Academic Regulations and Procedures;
- Special Language Examination;
- External Examiner Nominations;
- Academic Council Nominations to Presidential Search Board and Presidential Selection Board;
- UL Research Ethics & Governance Committee;
- Discipline Committee;
- Student Intake Figures AY25/26;
- Human Rights EDI Strategy Progress Report;
- Policy on the Use of Data to Enhance Teaching, Learning & Assessment (Learning Analytics) – recommended for approval;
- Reports Noted – Academic Council Grading Committee Report and EHS, KBS and Science and Engineering Faculty Board Reports.

22.2 AGREED On the recommendation of the Academic Council to approve the following:

- Policy on Use of Data to Enhance Teaching, Learning and Assessment (Learning Analytics);
- Procedures for the Management of Allegations of Academic Misconduct.

23. ANNUAL CHARITIES REGULATOR RETURN

23.1 NOTED Memorandum from the ARC and Corporate Secretary entitled "Charities Regulator – request to annual report", dated 11 June 2025, previously circulated. The Corporate Secretary briefed members on the requirement as a registered charity to file an Annual Report with the Charities Regulator within nine months of their financial year end. The Report was considered by Executive Committee and by the ARC and considered and requested to be approved by the GA.

23.2 AGREED To approve the University's Annual Report for the period 1 October 2023 to 30 September 2024 for submission to the Regulator by the deadline of 30 July 2025.

24. NON-AUDIT SERVICES POLICY

24.1 NOTED Documentation including the "Non-Audit Services Policy May 2025 tracked version" and "Non-Audit Services Policy ARC June 2025", previously circulated.

24.2 NOTED The Chair ARC, briefed the members, following clarification on the wording, that this Policy was now being resubmitted for approval.

24.3 AGREED To approve the Non-Audit Services Policy as presented.

25. PRESIDENTIAL RECRUITMENT PROCESS

25.1 NOTED Memorandum from the Corporate Secretary entitled "Appointment of the Chief Officer/President, University of Limerick", dated 3 July 2025 and "Process and Outline Timeline", both previously circulated

25.2 NOTED The Corporate Secretary provided an update on the process for the appointment of the next President, including the current status and revised timelines. The CSO is being supported by the HR Division and by the Director of Strategic Planning. The next step will be the development of a candidate prospectus.

26. SIXTH GOVERNING AUTHORITY REGULATIONS AND PROCESS

26.1 NOTED Correspondence from DFHERIS re the University of Limerick (Selection, Election, Nomination and Appointment of GA Members) Regulations and Process, dated 12 May 2025, draft response to DFHERIS, and UL Governing Authority Revised Regulations and Process, dated July 2025, all, previously circulated.

26.2 NOTED The Corporate Secretary briefed members on the draft amendments previously submitted to the Minister, DFHERIS. He confirmed as previously discussed, he had revisited the draft and incorporated a broader revision to the Regulations and has provided a revised proposal that will meet with the DFHERIS requirements. [redacted]

26.3 AGREED To approve the amended UL Governing Authority Regulations and Process for submission to the Minister, DFHERIS.

27. PERFORMANCE REVIEW OF THE PRESIDENT

27.1 NOTED Memorandum from the Chancellor entitled "Arrangements for the Management of the Performance of the Chief Officer (President)", dated 3 July 2025 and "S.18 Universities Act 1997, Arrangements for the Annual Performance Review of President", previously circulated.

27.2 NOTED The Corporate Secretary outlined the establishment of an annual review process for the President's performance, supporting institutional accountability and aligning leadership assessment with the University's strategic goals.

27.3 NOTED It was proposed that the Annual Review Panel, rather than the full Governing Authority, conduct the detailed assessment of the President's performance. The GA will maintain oversight through Panel approvals, updates, and periodic reviews. The Chancellor and Acting President have reviewed and support this approach.

27.4 AGREED To approve the proposed Arrangements for the Annual Performance Review of the President as presented.

28. CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT (CRM)

28.1 NOTED Document entitled "Strategic CRM project update for Governing Authority", dated 26 June 2025, previously circulated.

28.2 NOTED [redacted]

28.3 NOTED Members agreed that additional oversight for major projects like the CRM would be beneficial. Currently, there is no formal reporting requirement. The need for clearer assurance processes and feedback mechanisms will be considered.

28.4 AGREED The GA to consider whether future threshold expenditure, regardless of being within an approved budget should be treated as a reserved matter. This would mean requiring approval from a sub-committee or potentially the GA itself.

28.5 NOTED [redacted]

29. REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF HEA ACT 2022

29.1 NOTED Letter from the IUA, 11 June 2025, regarding a review of the implementation of the HEA Act 2022. The Corporate Secretary briefed the members on DFHERIS's internal review and their invitation for feedback on potential improvements or amendments to the Act. Comments are welcomed by the 31 July 2025.

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30. ANNUAL REPORT TO HEA: ENDING SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT IN IRISH INSTITUTION

30.1 NOTED Document entitled “Safe, Respectful, Supportive and Positive: Ending Sexual Violence and Harassment in Higher Education Institutions – HEI Annual Report Template 2023-24.”, previously circulated.

31. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

31.1 Review Request

31.1.1 NOTED The Corporate Secretary received notice of a request for review from a candidate unsuccessful in the recent promotions Across the Merit Bar to Associate Professor B. In accordance with the Policy & Procedures for the Progression Across the Merit Bar, GA are requested to appoint three members (none of whom will be a senior officer), to a Review Committee.

31.1.2 AGREED Professor Brigid Laffan, Mr Kevin Fleming and Ms Anne O’Connor would be appointed to the Review Committee

Documentation of Note

- ATOM Correspondence [redacted]
- Note from HEA re meeting in UL 4 June 2025
- [redacted]
- [redacted]
- [redacted]