PUBLIC

Edge Hill University

BOARD OF GOVERNORS

Minutes of the meeting held on 16 March 2026

Present

Mark Wilkinson	Independent member	Chair of the Board
Claire Blennerhassett	Teaching staff member	
Sequoia Chapman	Independent member	
Ian Cleminson	Independent member	Chair, Finance Committee
Andrew Cooper	Independent member	
Leon Culbertson	Academic Board nominee	
Jenny Foster	Support staff member	
Tim Hudson	Independent member	Chair, Audit & Risk Committee
Antony Lockley	Independent member	Chair, Remuneration Committee
Jo Nettleton	Independent member	
Paul Nyamwela	Student member	
Natalie Palin	Independent member	
Sophie Rowley	Student member	
Helen Stalker	Independent member	
Gayle Wells	Independent member	

In Attendance

Ceri Davies	Interim Chief Executive, Edge Hill Students' Union	
Lynn Hill	Chief Operating Officer	Acting Joint Vice-Chancellor
Neil Morris	Director of Digital Transformation	*For agenda items BG.25.089, BG.25.090 and BG.25.091*
Rhona Morris	Governance, Projects & Policy Manager	Secretariat (Acting Clerk)
Peter Roberts	Head of Risk, Assurance & Business Support	*For agenda items BG.25.089, BG.25.090 and BG.25.091*
George Talbot	Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research & Knowledge Exchange) and Dean of Arts & Sciences	Acting Joint Vice-Chancellor
Jo Wright	Chief Student & Governance Officer	

BG.25.081 Declarations of Interest

None.

BG.25.082 Chair's Announcements

.01 Welcome to new member

The Chair welcomed Tim Hudson, Independent Governor and Chair of the Audit & Risk Committee.

.02 Strategic Plan launch events

Following Board approval of the Strategic Plan 2026-31, the University is planning launch events in Lancashire and Greater Manchester, with a third planned for Cheshire and Merseyside. An open invitation to attend any of the events was extended to Independent Governors, with full details to be circulated via email.

Action: Acting Clerk

.03 Office for Students meeting

The Chair and Acting Clerk had held an introductory meeting with representatives from the Office for Students (OfS). The meeting was positive in tone, covering institutional risk, leadership changes and corporate governance framework. All attendees found the meeting helpful and committed to open engagement as required.

BG.25.083 Chair's Action

There was no Chair's Action to report.

BG.25.084 Minutes of the previous meeting

Received: *Document BG/053/25*

Resolved: The minutes of the meeting held on 16 February 2026 were agreed as an accurate record.

BG.25.085 Action Log

Received: *Document BG/054/25*

Members noted that progress had been made since the last meeting, and that all items had either been actioned or were in progress.

The Action Log was received.

BG.25.086 Matters arising not included elsewhere on the agenda

None.

SECTION A ITEMS

BG.25.087 Vice-Chancellor's Report

Received: *Document BG/055/25*

Reported: The Acting Vice Chancellors confirmed that there was no new information to add to the report.

Discussed: In discussion, and in response to Governors' questions, the following information was noted:

.01 Revised Executive structure

- The Board tested the methodology that had been used to re-evaluate the Executive structure following the Vice-Chancellor's departure *[Exempt from publication – confidential]*
  Governors noted:
  - *[Exempt from publication – confidential]*
  - that the Board has delegated responsibility for staffing beyond Senior Postholders to the Vice-Chancellor. It is therefore the Acting Vice-Chancellors' responsibility to ensure there is competent leadership and management across the University's core functions.
  - An evaluation of the impact of the new structure will be undertaken at the six-month point.

Action: Acting Vice-Chancellors

.02 Staff communication

- Members welcomed the Executive's drive to improve transparency of communication with staff. An online question and answer board (Vevox) for staff to anonymously pose questions has been introduced ahead of an All-Staff Meeting to help ensure that any communication gaps or issues of concern can be addressed.

.03 Clearing

- *[Exempt from publication – commercial interests]*

.04 Research funding

- The Northern Health Science Alliance (NHSA), comprising 9 NHS trusts and 12 universities, has been awarded £1.4 million in research funding. The University, which is the only non-Russell Group member, will gain significant leverage from this award.

Agreed: To receive the Vice-Chancellor's Report.

BG.25.088 Student Report

Received: *Document BG/056/25*

Reported: The Student Union Representative introduced the report, noting that its contents remained contemporary.

Discussed: The Board noted satisfaction with the Student Report and confirmed that they had no further questions.

Agreed: To receive the Student Report.

BG.25.089 Board Assurance Framework Summary Report

Received: *Document BG/057/25*

[Secretary's Note: Agenda items BG.25.089, BG.25.090 and BG.25.091 were considered at the start of the meeting to allow the Director of Digital Transformation and the Head of Risk, Assurance and Business Support to attend and respond to Governors' questions'.]

Reported: The Chief Student and Governance Officer (GSCO) introduced the item, confirming that there was no new information to add to the circulated report.

Discussed: In discussion, and in response to Governors' questions, the following information was noted:

- The Business Assurance Framework (BAF) was scrutinised in depth by the Audit & Risk Committee (ARC) at its 16 February meeting, where assurance on all matters was noted. Although the Board stated overall satisfaction with the February iteration of the BAF, Governors expressed concern that it might now be a partly historical document which did not fully represent potential risks emerging since that meeting. The Executive undertook to update the BAF where the University's risk profile experiences significant change in the period between an ARC meeting and a Board meeting.

Action: CSGO

.01 Financial Position (STR0010)

- *[Exempt from publication – confidential]*

- The University's Internal Auditors (RSM) have completed their assessment of the Nurse Paramedic and PG Dip Nursing situation. The assignment report will be considered by the ARC in June.

.02 Estates strategy (STR0011)

- The plan to maintain and upgrade parts of the University's estates refers to the buildings themselves rather than the learning facilities within them. Where equipment essential to programme delivery or research strategies requires replacement, Faculties may submit a bid through standard budgeting processes.

.03 Cyber Security (STR0003)

- The risk level for Cyber Security has increased on the ARC's recommendation from low to medium. On 13 March, Fortinet facilitated an exercise to test the University's arrangements. A report on outcomes will inform Edge Hill's plans to further mitigate risk in this area.

Agreed: To receive the Board Assurance Framework Summary Report.

BG.25.090 Environmental Sustainability Annual Report

Received: *Document BG/058/25*

Reported: The CSGO and Head of Risk, Assurance and Business Support introduced the Report, highlighting that:

- The University's People and Planet league table ranking has improved from 3rd class in 2024/25 to 2.1 class in 2025/26.
- Membership of the Sustainability Committee has been refreshed to represent the University's sustainability community at all levels.

Discussed: In discussion, and in response to Governors' questions, the following points were noted:

- The Board welcomed the strengthened arrangements to prioritise, embed and measure the success of sustainable development activities across the University. Members noted that the new Strategic Plan 2026-31 provides a renewed direction and measurable targets. Owing to the high level of interest and investment young people have in environmental sustainability, Edge Hill's achievements and objectives in this regard will be incorporated into marketing initiatives.

- The new Dean of Centre of Enhanced Learning and Teaching will identify and drive opportunities to expand and enhance the University's approach to Education for Sustainable Development (ESD), to meaningfully engage academic staff and students. The work to embed ESD within the curriculum will be underpinned by the University's strategic priority to carry out a full portfolio review.

- Members suggested that consideration be given to broadening the scope of Edge Hill's sustainability agenda to encompass social sustainability and socio-economic development themes. The Board noted that there are existing projects and initiatives which could be shared and developed under this umbrella.

Action: CGSO

- Owing to the financial pressures faced by the University, the timeline for Edge Hill to become carbon neutral will receive further consideration before the Annual Report is published. Governors noted that the Carbon Management Plan will deliver some cashable benefits for the University (e.g. on energy costs).

- Members agreed that University strategies and/or their associated policies with significant financial implications should be considered by Finance Committee before presentation to the Board. The Finance Committee Chair and Acting Clerk will liaise with the Executive to identify which policies and strategies should be brought into the Committee's remit.

Action: Finance Committee Chair/Acting Clerk

- The CSGO undertook to check whether higher education institutions are subject to Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures-aligned mandatory reporting.

Action: CSGO

Agreed: To receive the Environmental Sustainability Annual Report.

BG.25.091 Student Records System Programme: Progress Update

Received: *Document BG/059/25*

Reported: The Director of Digital Transformation introduced the Report, and stated that since it had been produced:

- The Executive Sponsor for the Student Records System Programme (SRS) has changed from the COO to the CSGO to better align with Executive portfolios.
- User acceptance testing referenced in paragraph 9 has been completed.
- *[Exempt from publication – commercial interests]*

Discussed: In discussion, and in response to Governors' questions, the following points were noted:

- There has been significant progress towards operational readiness of the Programme since the last update was made to the Board in November 2025.

- Owing to the scale of the financial and operational risk that the Programme carries, in the past the University had routinely shared with the Board an additional level of detail regarding the assessment of key risks. Governors expressed concern that the current report did not provide sufficient detail on the management of core risks to enable strategic assurance.

- Whilst the Executive provided reassurance that the Programme Board will be providing robust oversight of the full risk profile and associated mitigations, it was agreed that the ARC should receive a regular, detailed, progress report to allow it to test the control systems in place and gain assurance. Noting the Programme Board's upcoming Go/No-Go decision date of 26 March, it was further agreed that the initial report providing this additional detail would be circulated to Governors by correspondence.

Action: Director of Digital Transformation

- To ensure Admissions reporting can be delivered in the absence of dedicated resource, it is critical that the recruitment of key staff takes place by September 2026. Recruitment is being tracked and progress indicates that the associated risk level will decrease in the next three months.

- The University is working with the other institutions that are introducing the same Ellucian product. The Programme team is satisfied that the Minimum Viable Product (MVP) defined for the SRS includes all functionality required by the University.

- A third party has been contracted to undertake data migration from the extant system to the new SRS. The involvement of a specialist contractor has reduced the risk associated with this element of the Programme.

Agreed: To receive the Student Records System Programme: Progress Update.

BG.25.091 Professional Services Review: Progress Update

Received: *Document BG/060/25*

Reported: The COO introduced the Report and highlighted the following:

- The term Professional Services Review has been retired. The project now forms a core part of the University's Business Optimisation framework. Future Board reports will provide updates on the broader Business Optimisation programme.
- The first Programme Board was postponed to 18 March. Financial targets will be agreed at this meeting and shared with the Board as part of the next update.
- Not all targets will be achievable in the current financial year. In view of this, business optimisation savings will continue into 2026/27.

Discussed: In discussion, the following points were noted:

- The membership and terms of reference for the Programme Board have been updated to ensure alignment and optimisation with the University's digital transformation agenda and the SRS Project.

- There are complex staffing requirements associated with Phase 2 of the SRS Programme and the long-term provision of Academic Registry and Admissions functions. The size and shape of teams will change in accordance with Programme delivery and business needs *[exempt from publication – confidential]*.

- The Staff Pulse survey identified that a greater proportion of academic, rather than professional service, staff were experiencing morale issues and had concerns about the possibility of changes to professional staffing. At its next meeting, the University's Senior Leadership Group will agree action plans for leaders to undertake conversations with their staff around the themes raised, as well as the benefits to staff and students which the University aims to achieve through business optimisation. This activity will be incorporated into leaders' personal objectives for the next quarter.

- Reviewing the timeline presented in Appendix 2, Governors noted that, whilst student interests are central to all aspects of the Business Optimisation programme, this was not made explicit in the timeline. The Board advised the COO to ensure that the Programme Board gives due prominence to the student perspective.

Agreed: To receive the Professional Services Review Progress Update.

SECTION B ITEMS

BG.25.093 Update from Committee Chairs

.01 Governance & Nominations Committee (16 March 2026)

Reported: The Chair provided a summary of the Committee meeting held on 16 March.

- Independent Governors were appointed to Board committees as follows:
  - Natalie Palin as a member of Audit and Risk Committee
  - Sequoia Chapman as a member of Finance Committee
- The appointment of a Vice-Chair of the Board remains outstanding and will be considered at the Committee's next meeting.
- The Committee agreed in principle to explore the expansion of the remit of the Remuneration Committee to include consideration of people-related issues.
- There was broad support to consider the inclusion of Stakeholder Governors (staff and student members) on selected Board committees, with appropriate safeguards and clarity of remit.
- A decision had been taken in principle to explore the appointment of an Interim Vice-Chancellor alongside commencing recruitment for a substantive postholder. The Committee endorsed the Terms of Reference for the Interim Vice-Chancellor Recruitment Committee and recommended them to the Board for approval.

Discussed: Members congratulated the newly appointment committee members.

Agreed: *i)* To receive the Chair's Update.
ii) **To approve the establishment of, and Terms of Reference for, the Interim Vice-Chancellor Recruitment Committee**

BG.25.094 Q2 Overview and reforecast position

Received: *Document BG/061/25*

Reported: The COO introduced the item and noted that the full report will be discussed by Finance Committee at its 30 March meeting.

Discussed: During discussion members noted the following:

- The Board commended the significant work undertaken by the University to enhance financial reporting over the last 18 months to provide in-year data, position analysis and action in real-time.

- The University is on target to achieve the net surplus target set in the budget. The position for 2026/27 remains challenging and highlights the requirement for the University to diversify its income.

Agreed: To receive the Q2 Overview and reforecast position.

BG.25.095 Edge Hill Students' Union: Amendment of Articles

Received: *Document BG/062/25*

Reported: The Interim Chief Executive of the Students' Union (SU) introduced the item.

Discussed: During discussion members noted that the amended Articles will provide improved continuity within the SU governance structure.

Agreed: To **approve the Edge Hill Students' Union Amendment of Articles**.

BG.25.096 Any other business

None.

SECTION C ITEMS

The following items were received for information:

BG.25.097 Date and time of next meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for 18 May 2026 at 5:30pm.