Board of Trustees

MINUTES

Wednesday 1st Oct 2025, 9am.
Blackfriars Campus

Members present:	Jesse Norman (JNo) Chair of the Board James Newby (JNe) President and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Bill Jackson (BJ) Trustee David Hughes (DH) Trustee Jon Emmet (JE) Trustee Julian Drinkall (JD) Trustee Natasha Rothbucher-Thomas (NRT) Trustee Marc Leppard (ML) Trustee Timothy Bell (TB) Elected Student Trustee Graeme Ferguson (GF) Elected Staff Trustee
In attendance:	Robert Jenkins (RJ) Finance Director Samantha Lewis (SL), Director of People and Operations Anthea Parker (AP) Director of Infrastructure & Projects Chib Alexander (CoSec) Company Secretary
Apologies:	Yasmin Ali (YA) Trustee Aimee Clark (AC) Trustee

1. Welcome

Noted:

I. JNo welcomed all members to the meeting.

2. Declarations of Interest

I. There were no declarations of interest.

II. There were no related party transactions declared.

3. Minutes and Action Log | Lead **CoSec**

I. The minutes from July 2025 meeting were deemed to be a true record and approved. Edit for Previous minutes – clarify that the OfS is Imposing an extension on NDAPS – redrafted for clarity that this is being disputed.

II. Action log – noted the item regarding UCAS discussions had been reviewed and would be picked up under an away day or in-depth future discussion. JNe noted role of new Marketing/Fundraising committee could support a review in future.

APPROVED – Minutes from Meeting held 25th July 2025

4. **Chair's Business** I Lead **Jesse Norman**

A. JNo reported on Board recruitment, noting that a public recruitment process would be required and that a small number of applicants were anticipated. JNo confirmed the intention to revisit and pursue the shortlisted candidates from the 2024 round. A skills audit was being reviewed, including consideration of gender balance, and the need for a senior academic or a recognised senior business engineer. Redacted [Not for Publication]

B. JD noted that there were individuals who might be suitable for sub-Board committees, but who may not have the time capacity for full Board membership. Co-opted members were discussed. JNo and JNe noted that co-opted members provided valuable insight, although they did not count towards meeting quoracy as standard. It was agreed that co-option remained a useful mechanism to encourage involvement with NMITE and to support potential future Board candidates.

5. **Risk Register I** Lead **Anthea Parker**

BD.26.01.02 NMITE Risk Register

A. Redacted [Not for Publication]
B. Redacted [Not for Publication]
C. ML provided a summary from ARC regarding Health and Safety matters, including the Blackfriars roof survey required to support risk management and future planning. JNe reiterated the lack of long-term funding for major repairs but confirmed that short-term issues had been identified and resolved. DH asked if a condition survey had been undertaken at the point of contract with HC. Members requested that AP review this and circulate an overview to ARC members.
D. ML raised the issue of Hemlock at Skylon and SL confirmed that Hereford Council had accepted responsibility for addressing the matter.
E. ML reported that TIAA had confirmed there was no outstanding audit actions.
F. ARC approved proceeding with Cyber Essentials and not extending to Cyber Essentials plus due to timing and staffing constraints.

6. **Finance Report and Budget** I Lead **Robert Jenkins**

BD.26.01.03-4 NMITE Finance and Budget paper

A. Redacted [Not for Publication]
B. RJ provided an update on the ongoing year-end audit, noting that the on-site audit meetings had taken place and that the Audit Clearance Meeting was scheduled for 21st November. He confirmed that no issues had been raised at the time of reporting.
C. Redacted [Not for Publication]

Budget consolidation

D. Redacted [Not for Publication]
E. Redacted [Not for Publication]
F. Redacted [Not for Publication]
G. Redacted [Not for Publication]
H. Redacted [Not for Publication]
I. Redacted [Not for Publication]
J. Redacted [Not for Publication]
K. Redacted [Not for Publication]
L. JD asked when the Strategic Plan was next due for review. CoSec confirmed that the current plan runs until 2028, meaning it would normally be scheduled for review during the 2026/27 financial year. JNo suggested that, given the pace of change in the sector and NMITE's current trajectory, there may be value in bringing forward the review. JNo emphasised the importance of ensuring that the revised Strategic Plan has a clear and core focus on NMITE's progression towards achieving university status.
M. Redacted [Not for Publication]
N. JNe observed that two key being referenced and noted that the organisational plan was revised and reviewed more regularly could be brought to the Board but that the strategic plan due by 2028 contained long-term financial planning. JNe noted that the current 2028 review timeline was predicated on the completion of NDAPs and transition to FDAPs, and any delay to this process would have a significant impact on future planning. JNe noted that the implications of this have not yet been fully clarified with the OfS which would make reviewing the Strategic plan challenging at this time.
O. BJ commented on how sensitive NMITE's financial position is to student recruitment and stressed the need to further engage with the local market to strengthen recruitment. JNo noted that this view was shared by the Head of Marketing, and JNe added that there had already been a notable increase in the number of local students, which had effectively doubled year-on-year.
P. Redacted [Not for Publication]
Q. Redacted [Not for Publication]
R. JNo noted that academic staff had played an increased role in outreach and marketing activities during 2024/25. However, members noted that the growth in student numbers had reduced the capacity of academics to continue supporting such activities at the same

level. This was identified as an operational pressure that may need review as part of future resource planning.

S. JNo expressed appreciation to both the ARC and FRC Committees for due diligence on financial and risk-related matters discussed.

Redacted [Not for Publication]

A. Redacted [Not for Publication]
B. Redacted [Not for Publication]
C. Redacted [Not for Publication]

Finance and Resources Committee Update

A. The report from the recent Finance and Resources committee meeting held on 15th July 2025 was taken as read.
B. Redacted [Not for Publication]

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7. **Student Liaison Update** I Lead **Timothy Bell**

Verbal Update

A. TB noted the increase in student numbers and reported that the campus felt busy. TB noted that the SU members had been involved in welcoming the new cohort.
B. TB raised the potential impact of increased student numbers and full courses on the ability for students to move from the Foundation Year or change course after enrolment. GCW confirmed that some students in 2025 had transferred from the Foundation Year to named degrees, and that they were reviewing whether additional information could have supported enrolling them directly onto the named degree. JNe noted that two transfers were a small number within a cohort of 75 but agreed that the review was appropriate, emphasising the importance of maintaining flexibility for such transfers.
C. JNe introduced discussion on careers and employability. TB reported that a CV-writing session had recently been delivered to his cohort.
D. TB confirmed that accommodation for first-year students was sufficient this year but was concerned that capacity would become constrained if NMITE recruited towards the higher target of 120 students. JNe confirmed that higher student numbers would increase pressure on Eigngate accommodation and that there was limited availability in the private rental market in Hereford. Members noted that there approximately 300 purpose-built student accommodation spaces in the city but that NMITE would need to enhance targeted support for students seeking private accommodation. JNe also noted that more local students were choosing to live at home, reducing immediate

accommodation pressure. Members agreed to review future potential reporting on Student accommodation planning, risks and mitigation.

8. **Executives Report** I Lead **James Newby**

BD.26.01.05 CEO report to the Board of Trustees

A. Redacted [Not for Publication]
B. JNe provided an update on sector developments following the Labour Party Conference, noting the government's ambition to increase participation in degree-level education to two-thirds of all students. It was highlighted that this initiative would primarily target Further Education, Levels 4–6 and Apprenticeship routes. JNe advised that NMITE would need to closely monitor the regional disparities that have historically affected the achievement of such national targets.
C. JNe confirmed that following the Boards approval the Access and Participation Plan (APP) had been submitted. JD queried which KPIs are being tracked, suggesting it would be beneficial to review metrics such as Average earnings of graduates and Employment outcomes for students with local and national comparisons for free school meals applicants. JNe noted that the APP plan has a target of 20%, and JNo highlighted Government moves aiming to increase skills and DWP employment pledges. Members noted that the potential LLE funding could support NMITE due to its agility and block modular approach compared to other providers. Members asked if reporting on selected metrics could be included in the CEO report for monitoring. JNe added that NMITE tracks these metrics for regulatory reporting, but they are not currently used in marketing, which could be a valuable enhancement.
D. JNe reported a 14% female intake, an increase on the previous year but lower than hoped despite a targeted campaign and the introduction of a Female Student Bursary. There was also a higher number of female applicants compared to offer holders.
E. Redacted [Not for Publication]
F. JNe provided an update on the ongoing building developments, noting that the structure of the new facility was now visible and that refurbishment works were underway within the previously unused Blackfriars spaces. JNo suggested the opportunity for a student tour and engagement session to connect students with the project's progress and design. AP confirmed that the BSc students were scheduled to visit the site in October as part of an integrated live-learning assessment and that engagement opportunities would be extended to non-BSc students to ensure inclusion.
G. JNe reported that an appointment had been made to the new post of Head of Teaching and Learning Delivery, with Richard Lillington joining to support multi-programme coordination. He confirmed that recruitment for additional academic staff to support the 2026 intake was expected to commence in January 2026.
H. Redacted [Not for Publication]

9. **Programme Portfolio** I Lead **Gary C Wood**

BD.26.01.06 Proposal for the Development of Autonomous Systems programme

A. Redacted [Not for Publication]
B. GCW noted that the programme had been informally referred to as the "Drones Degree," though this terminology would need to be refined and a more appropriate title would likely be decided during the Stage 1 approval process, which would also determine whether the programme would be structured as a MSc, Meng, Postgraduate Certificate, or other qualification level.
C. Redacted [Not for Publication]
D. EL commented that larger institutions typically allow around 18 months for programme approval processes, meaning NMITE would need to progress this on an expedited timeline. EL stated that while such agility was possible, it carried risks, and they emphasised that NMITE must not compromise on academic quality or rigour, particularly given the ongoing OfS scrutiny.
E. GCW concluded that while the opportunity presented clear potential, his principal concern related to the ambitious timeline. He noted that NMITE did not presently have the academic expertise to support the development of the programme. Members noted that NMITE would need to secure the proposed funding to recruit the necessary academic expertise to support programme design, development, to allow for marketing in time for a 2026 intake.
F. Redacted [Not for Publication]
G. Redacted [Not for Publication]
H. Redacted [Not for Publication]
I. JD expressed support for the opportunity but emphasised the need to manage associated risks and ensure appropriate mitigations. JD flexibility to pursue but also ensure that NMITE has options to retreat should this not be viable?
J. Redacted [Not for Publication]
K. JD suggested exploring additional commercial partnerships to broaden the degree's civilian relevance and applications. NRT added that drone technologies are increasingly being developed for environmental purposes, she cited an example, of drones constructed from bamboo to support reforestation and monitoring in the Amazon rainforest, highlighting opportunities to position the programme within a wider sustainability and innovation narrative.
L. BJ expressed discomfort regarding the potential reputational risks associated with the proposal and the possible impact on staff and students. BJ noted their experience as the former Chair of the Enterprise Zone, highlighting that Hereford was the only Defence and

Security Zone in the UK and had previously been the focus of national media attention and public criticism, including incidents of harassment.

M. SL noted that Hereford continues to develop as a centre for advanced technology and innovation and confirmed that the dual-use (civilian and defence) applications of the proposed programme had been fully considered during internal discussions. JNo emphasised the importance of ensuring that all marketing materials clearly demonstrate the industrial and commercial support for the programme at both local and national levels. JNo also acknowledged the high reputational sensitivity of the proposed degree and confirmed that a proactive communications and PR plan would be developed to manage and mitigate these risks effectively.

N. TB agreed that the opportunity appeared strong overall but noted the associated risks. TB asked for further clarity on the potential impact on staff and student recruitment should reputational concerns materialise, as well as the likely financial implications of such scenarios.

O. TB also queried the potential impact on FDAPs and regulatory engagement if the intended launch date were to shift from 2026 to 2027. JNe confirmed that NMITE would not begin accepting applications until the programme had received full internal and external approval. While expressions of interest could be collected, formal recruitment could not proceed under regulatory requirements. JNe also noted that the development process would limit the available marketing period ahead of the first intake. EL added that, while a delay might be undesirable, it could serve to demonstrate the robustness of NMITE's quality assurance processes. EL noted that Stage 1 approval involves consultation with multiple external partners and that responsibility for programme development ultimately lies with the Academic Council.

P. NRT asked whether, given the similarities in core modules across NMITE's engineering programmes, this common first year could provide additional time for programme development. GCW confirmed, while there would potentially be overlap in some content, the new programme must be fully specified and validated before it can be independently marketed. Members noted that although students could begin on existing programmes and later transfer, this would still require the validated autonomous systems programme to be in place.

Q. JNo asked whether GCW viewed this as unachievable or simply requiring further assessment of risks. GCW clarified that the process was not impossible but involved numerous moving parts that would all need to align to meet the expedited timeline, noting the need to maintain a clear regulatory pathway.

R. Redacted [Not for Publication]

S. JNe emphasised the importance of distinguishing between the different categories of risk, commercial risks including student recruitment and staffing, and quality assurance (QA) or regulatory risks. He stated that while commercial risks could be managed and mitigated, the QA and regulatory risks would remain significant even with a 2027 start, though the additional time would allow for greater scoping and risk management. JNe also noted that the QA and marketing teams would require additional resourcing under the expedited scenario. JNo confirmed that the budget included allowances for risk mitigation in these areas.

T. Redacted [Not for Publication]

The Board discussed the proposal and approved proceeding with the development of the Autonomous Systems (Drones) degree.

U. GCW confirmed that the next step would be to return to the Board with the final programme proposal following completion of the first-stage development process. JD requested that the subsequent report include an updated risk register to reflect the formerly discussed risks and potential mitigations.

V. Redacted [Not for Publication]

The Board discussed and approved proceeding to advertise the academic post, prior to the formal receipt of funding.

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10. Academic Update I Lead **GCW**

BD.26.01.07 Academic Update

A. The report was taken as read. Members discussed the allocation of the £415k in financial awards for the 2509 cohort.

B. GCW noted that the current report is largely retrospective and confirmed the intention to refocus future reporting toward key upcoming items and issues on the horizon. This would enable the Board to contribute proactively rather than solely commenting on completed actions. JNo agreed that this approach would be beneficial in supporting more informed Board discussions.

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11. NMITE Governance I Lead **CoSec**

BD.26.01.08 a- d Committee Terms of Reference

Policies:

A. CoSec provided an update on the development of the Academic freedom and freedom of Speech policy, noting that the finalised policy had been delayed and would be reported for approval at December Board.

Health and Safety reporting:

B. CoSec noted that the Health and Safety reporting had been reviewed by ARC. SL confirmed that key issues had been highlighted under the ARC summary and were included within the risk review.

Committee Terms of Reference:

A. Audit and Risk Committee Terms Approved. Members reviewed the membership for this committee and approved.
B. Finance, Property and Resources Committee Terms – Approved. Members reviewed the membership for this committee and approved.
C. Marketing and Fundraising Committee – Approved. Members reviewed the terms for this committee and approved.

12. AOB | Lead **Jesse Norman**

A. BJ raised the topic of Maylord Orchards and suggested NMITE review and potential scope to lease sections for Studio spaces.
B. RJ highlighted to members that the annual accounts and financial statements would be presented at the December Board and will need a majority for Approval and signing.

The next meeting to be held in person on 12th December 2025 9am