Academic Council
DRAFT MINUTES

Wednesday 18th February 2026 12.30 Blackfriars Building

Present	Professor Gary C Wood (GCW), Academic Director Mary Kenyon-James (MKJ), Director of Registry and Student Life Richard Lillington (RL), Head of Learning and Teaching Emma Lewis (EL), Head of Quality Assurance Mike Smith (MS), Associate Professor Professor Leanne DeMain (LDM), External member Graeme Ward (GW), Elected Academic Member Bertie Knight (BK), Elected Academic Member Lucy Stonehouse (LS), Elected Professional Services member Theo Jones (TJ), Elected Student Member
In attendance	Chib Alexander (CoSec) Company Secretary Neil Casey – Observer, Governance Effectiveness review
Apologies	James Newby (JNe), President and CEO (Chair), Professor Robert Hairstans (RH) CATT Director

1 Welcome

I. The Chair opened the meeting and confirmed it was quorate.
II. Council warmly welcomed the new elected Staff and Student members, GW, BK, LS and TJ.
III. CoSec introduced Neil Casey as NMITEs Governance effectiveness reviewer.

2 Minutes and Actions Log | Lead Co-Sec

Received: AC.26.01.01a Draft Minutes Nov 25

I. The minutes from November 2025 were deemed to be a true record and therefore approved.
I. Action log updates: 3 Completed, 3 on agenda

3 Chair's Report | Lead Gary C Wood

Received: Verbal Update

Noted:

I. GCW provided a verbal overview of the Governance effectiveness review, he informed

Council that the timeline for the conclusion of the review was the end of April.

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4 **Committee Reports** I Lead **XXX**

Received: AC.26.02.02i QuAC Report
AC.26.02.02ii AAC Report

Noted:

Quality Assurance Committee (QuAC)

I. The QuAC report was taken as read. EL noted that key business was reflected further on the agenda. EL also highlighted ongoing work to review student data reporting requirements and to consolidate reporting across the organisation where possible.

II. MS queried the reference to "unexplained classification" in item 2.8. EL advised that this terminology was used by the Office for Students (OfS) and relates to discrepancies between expected entry qualifications and achieved outcomes. RL added that the OfS was moving away from terms such as grade inflation.

Academic Affairs Committee (AAC):

III. The AAC report was taken as read.

Widening Participation Steering Group (WPSG):

IV. EL reported that the WPSG had held a productive working meeting. The Access and Participation Plan (APP) had been approved by the OfS with minimal feedback, including acceptance of the whole-provider approach. Members noted that key targets and monitoring arrangements were now in place.

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5 **Awards Ratification update**I Lead **Lucy Stonehouse**

Received: AC.26.02.03 Ratification of Awards

Noted:

I. LS introduced the report, noted three students in 2309 who are expected to have BEng awards going through the March Assessment Board. To allow for AC to ratify the awards allowing the students to graduate in May alongside their peers.

APPROVED

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6 **Annual Enhancement Project** I Lead **Gary C Wood**

Received: AC.26.02.04 Annual Enhancement project

Noted:

I. GCW provided a summary of the report, noting that the first project was focused on student teamworking in the curriculum. Members noted the delay identified, which would result in a shorter turnaround between the project end date and the Academic Council meeting. It was proposed that the final report be presented at the July Academic Council meeting, rather than the earlier deadline, which would still allow for implementation by September 2026.

II. GW queried whether the survey results would be published. GCW confirmed that Sarah Peers had volunteered to support drafting the report and that responses would be shared with survey participants to ensure accurate representation before submission to the working group. GCW noted that no external had yet been appointed and that expressions of interest from academics were being reviewed. He reported that the working group included EL, AD, Head of Teaching and Learning, and an ASK representative. GCW noted that the working group would initially review survey feedback, including a parallel student survey.
III. MS recommended that, regardless of outcomes, staff training be implemented to ensure alignment with regulations. MKJ added that any changes affecting the current student cohort would need to be clearly communicated, supported by appropriate training and implementation.

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7 Student Lifecycle Reporting I Lead **Mary Kenyon-James**
Received: AC.26.02.05 Student Lifecycle quarterly dashboard

Noted:

Student Lifecycle Dashboard:

I. MKJ highlighted an increase in applications and offers since the report was circulated.

Annual Reporting on Appeals and Complaints:

I. MKJ noted that the Office for Independent Adjudicator runs on a calendar year reporting which does not align with general HEI cycles.
II. Redacted [Not for Publication]
III. RL acknowledged the steps taken and queried the ongoing approach. MKJ confirmed that further communications would be included in newsletters, and promotion of the report and support processes. RL suggested that this should also be embedded within induction week activities to ensure consistent early awareness and reinforcement.

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8 HE Landscape and Compliance Tracker I Lead **Emma Lewis**
Received: AC.26.02.06i HE landscapes paper
Received: AC.26.02.06ii OfS Conditions of Registration Tracker

Noted:

<u>HE Landscape</u>

I. EL provided an update on sector developments, noting that the University of Sussex is challenging the OfS ruling in relation to Freedom of Speech and governance failings. Members noted while this may not directly impact NMITE, the outcome could influence wider sector expectations and interpretation of the law.
II. LDM queried whether NMITE had reviewed its policy considering the challenge. CoSec confirmed that NMITE's policy had been implemented following the initial OfS ruling, but

that the outcome of the legal challenge may require further policy review. It was also noted that any changes to governance legislation could expose gaps requiring updates to policy.

III. EL confirmed that NMITE had already reflected on governance and policy approval structures following the initial OfS ruling.

OfS Tracker

I. EL provided an overview of the new initial conditions of registration, they reported that work was ongoing internally to RAG rate NMITEs current position against the new E and C conditions
II. CoSec noted the CUC Code of Governance and guidance was being reviewed and that this was expected to align with the initial E conditions. It was noted that no deadline had been set for the release of the updated code.

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9 Quality Framework Updates| Lead **Emma Lewis**

Received: AC.26.02.07 Quality Framework

Noted:

Teaching Excellence Framework:

I. EL provided an update on the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF), noting that it was currently at consultation stage. EL reported they had attended virtual consultation sessions and confirmed that NMITE had submitted an institutional response. Timeline for implementation of the framework was expected to be 2027-28
II. Members noted that proposals may bring all providers into scope, requiring participation in the TEF process. EL highlighted a wide range of sector responses, particularly reflecting the differing impact on smaller providers. EL advised that updates would continue to be brought to Academic Council, including risks, recommendations and monitoring, with NMITE undertaking ongoing internal self-assessment.
III. RL queried whether subject-level grading would be included, EL confirmed that this had been removed from scope.
IV. BK raised concerns that, if applied currently, NMITE may be at risk of not achieving a bronze rating. EL noted that, due to uncertainty around final metrics, full risk assessment remained difficult to predict. LDM suggested reviewing available data, including three years of NSS results, two years of progression data and one year of continuation data, to assess areas for improvement. MKJ confirmed that work is underway to support student engagement with surveys, including NSS and Graduate Outcomes, and to strengthen early-year student support. EL added that there may be consideration of alternative metrics for smaller providers, recognising limitations of small datasets.
V. EL noted that overall TEF ratings are expected to be determined by the lower of two core metrics: student experience and student outcomes. It was also suggested that institutions may be able to submit a contextual statement alongside their rating, although this is not yet confirmed.

Degree algorithms and classifications:

VI. EL informed council that OfS had investigated a number of providers they felt were at risk of breaching condition B4. EL highlighted potential sector-wide implications of this work, noting its relevance to regulatory expectations and institutional practice. EL provided assurance that, as currently written, NMITE's policy did not utilise either of the steps outlined by the OfS (as referenced in paragraph 2.3) and therefore no reporting to the OfS is required.

VII. EL also referenced a recent OfS report on grade classifications over time, noting that 2010–11 is used as a baseline comparator. It was highlighted that grade distributions increased during the COVID-19 period but have since returned broadly to pre-pandemic levels.

VIII. RL described the OfS review as a "shot across the bow" for the sector. LDM noted that several sector bodies are challenging the interpretation, highlighting increased student numbers and a higher proportion of APP students as contextual factors.

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10 Graduate Attributes I Lead **Gary C Wood**

Received: AC.26.02.08 Review of Graduate Attributes

Noted:

I. GCW noted that Council had agreed to undertake the review of attributes which were initially written before NMITE had graduates. GCW reported that work was ongoing with NMITE Founder Karen Usher and that the survey had been concluded on 13th Feb and that data analysis would need to be undertaken. Expects further feedback to be presented to Council at the summer meeting.

II. EL asked whether the aim is for the research project to be published externally. GCW noted that potential for conference publication as opposed to a journal is being explored due to the smaller data sets, but aiming to repeat this in future years to gather more data and review any emerging trends.

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11 Governance Updates I Lead **Lucy Stonehouse/ CoSec**

Received: AC.26.02.09 Amendments to Assessment Policy
AC.26.02.09i Policy Updates

Noted:

I. LS outlined the report highlighting the three key changes proposed to the Assessment Policy.

II. LS introduced the first proposed change, to formalise the use of third markers within policy. It was noted that the Office for Students (OfS) had identified instances where NMITE had used a third marker, but this was not explicitly defined in policy. LS outlined that the update would clarify the exceptional circumstances under which a third marker may be applied

Update to 6.3 of the Assessment policy – APPROVED

III. LS referred to the November 2025 Academic Council decision approving changes to the marking process and provided an overview of the work to operationalise these changes. It was noted that there were logistical and operational challenges in meeting the revised turnaround times for marking. LS requested Council approval to delay one element of the November agreement to allow systems within CORE to be implemented and embedded effectively to support the changes.

IV. Redacted [Not for Publication]

V. RL emphasised the importance of returning marks to students in a more timely manner to ensure feedback is meaningful and supports learning. RL highlighted that both marks and feedback are critical and noted that NMITE is not yet in a position to move immediately to the desired end state. A phased approach was recommended, members agreed this would be better than setting ambitious targets that may not be achievable.

VI. RL noted that the current structure does not adequately support academics in returning marks within three weeks of assessment. Members noted the intention to move away from standard double marking towards a sample marking approach, which would improve efficiency.

VII. MS queried whether feedback could be provided separately or in advance of marks. RL suggested that module-level feedback could be introduced to address common themes arising across cohorts. GW highlighted that formative feedback should already be provided throughout modules and noted that some assessments, such as Q&A formats, are marked in real time. It was suggested that marks for such assessments could potentially be released immediately. RL agreed this may be possible but stressed the need for consistency across assessment types.

VIII. Redacted [Not for Publication]

IX. EL queried whether there should be a requirement within policy to provide cohort or module-level feedback. LS confirmed this is not currently included. RL noted that while this is a desirable aim, it was not proposed as a formal policy requirement at this stage.

X. MS raised concerns regarding back-to-back marking pressures, particularly in co-taught modules where the module leads still carry responsibility for double marking. GCW noted that in some cases work has been divided across teams to support collaboration and calibration.

XI. GW noted the delays reported and queried how the future development of CORE would support. LS informed members that CORE would allow for the marks published directly to students.

XII. GCW summarised and asked council to agree to reduce the double marking, reduction in external examiner requirements but without the change to marking turn around deadline.

XIII. MKJ requested monitoring and review dates for updates to Council to ensure implementation of the agreed components to ensure that there is a formal oversight.

The Council approved the implementation of changes to Double marking and reduction in External examiner requirements.

XIV. LS introduced the third change. The policy would allow for an Internal review of grade profiles to ensure consistency of academic standards.

Update to 8.1 of the Assessment Policy APPROVED

The Council approved the Amendments to Assessment Policy

XV. Members discussed the late submission deadline within the assessment policy and agreed that it should be reviewed to ensure the deadline time of midnight continued to be appropriate.

XVI. CoSec introduced the Research Ethics Policy, noting a gap in clear ownership following the departure of the CAO. It was highlighted that draft changes had been made, including the use of a Microsoft Form which were being utilised by Academic staff but had not yet received formal approval. GCW agreed to take ownership of the policy. RL noted that Tim Belden was undertaking work on student ethics and could support the policy review.

XVII. Redacted [Not for Publication]

XVIII. GW queried the status of the AI policy. GCW reported that feedback from a recent staff development day indicated a preference for a more permissive approach rather than a prohibitive one, alongside a need for clearer guidance to support its application. RL emphasised the importance of clearly defining boundaries within the policy, particularly outlining when and how students may appropriately use AI.

The Council approved the removal of the Partnerships Guides.

*The Committee **agreed:***	Responsible	Deadline
Proposal to amend assessment submission deadline	RL	May 26
Update on implantation of Marking and assessment changes.	GCW	July 26
Research and ethics Policy. GCW to lead. Tim Belden and RL to support with student ethics. Policy in July, update in May	GCW	May 26
Update on development of new Partnerships guidance. CoSec to confirm this work is within scope of matrix team.	CoSec	May 26
AI policy for AC approval	GCW	TBC

12 Programme Development I Lead **Emma Lewis/ Gary C Wood**

Received: AC.26.02.10 Degree naming convention paper

AC.26.02.10i Approval Schedule for Autonomous Robotics

Noted:

Degree titles Naming conventions regulation:

I. EL provided background to the paper, noting that programme development discussions had focused on the use of "with" and "and" within degree titles. EL clarified that the intention was to define naming conventions for specialisms within a subject area, rather than across different disciplines.
II. RL cautioned against adopting conventions that may be overly restrictive. EL highlighted the risk that a lack of clarity in degree titles could lead to potential misrepresentation or misunderstanding of programmes for prospective students.

Council APPROVED the proposed regulation and that this be added as a new Annex to the Programme Approval and Module Change Policy.

Approval schedule for new Autonomous Robotics programme:

IV. GCW outlined the timeline for degree development, noting that extraordinary meetings would be required to meet the pace of the approval schedule.
V. BK queried the definition of the "programme team." GCW confirmed this refers to the team responsible for developing and submitting the programme, led by Professor Alexandru Stancu for the autonomous systems programme. GW asked whether stage one approval would be the first opportunity for wider internal staff to review content; GCW clarified that this stage focuses on a high-level framework and structure of the degree.
VI. Redacted [Not for Publication]
VII. MKJ asked for confirmation that student involvement was included in the stage one approval. EL confirmed that the student reps had been invited to the stage one approval meeting.

13 Any Other Business | Lead **Gary C Wood**

Received:

I. EL informed members about the potential for a Strategic Alignment Check to come to members for approval. It will be going to an extraordinary AAC for initial review and then circulated to Academic council members for approval.
II. Council discussed potential recovery from Cyber-attacks and an overview of internal measures, members requested a summary of actions taken by ARC and Exec.

Date of next meeting: Wednesday 13th May 2026