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COMMONWEALTH COLLEGE
OF EXELLENCE

COMMONWEALTH COLLEGE OF EXCELLENCE (CCE)

Governing Board

Draft minutes of the inaugural meeting
held on Thursday, 3 September 2026 at 10.00am, Balfour House.

Present: Professor Stephanie Marshall, Chair of Governance Board
Dr Abdul Matin Khan, Board Member
Dr Naeem Aslam, Board Member
Noman Talib, Board Member
Mohammad Islam, Board Member
Chris Payne, Independent board member
Christina Dzineku, Independent board member
Mark Jones, Independent board member
Namita Shete, Independent board member
Namita Mandhana, Independent board member
Ray Bloom, Independent board member (attending online)
Rod Bristow, Independent board member (from item 6)

In Attendance: Dawn Turpin

Apologies: None

INTRODUCTORY ITEMS

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

1.1 The Chair welcomed members to the inaugural meeting of the Governing Board.

1.2 The Principal provided a brief overview of the College's development. Founded in 1987 as an independent provider of education, the College achieved initial registration with the Office for Students (OfS) in 2022 and had subsequently experienced a period of significant growth.

1.3 The College was now seeking to move to Approved (Fee Cap) status with the OfS which required more formalised governance arrangements. As a result, governance was transitioning from a small Advisory Board to a Governing Board. The expertise of the independent members was welcomed in developing a new strategic plan for the next phase of the College's development.

1.4 Members introduced themselves and outlined their backgrounds, skills and experience.

2. PURPOSE OF THE MEETING

2.1 The Chair explained that the purpose of the meeting was to formally stand down the College's Advisory Board and establish a Governing Board with a majority of independent members in support of the College's Change of Registration Category (CORC) application to the OfS for registration in the Approved (Fee Cap) category. It was noted that two members of the former Advisory Board would not be continuing as members of the new Governing Board.

The independent members withdrew from the meeting.

2.2 The remaining members **approved** the appointment of the independent members to the Governing Board.

The independent members rejoined the meeting.

2.3 The Chair commented that the quality of Board papers and the level of information provided would need to improve to enable members to discharge their responsibilities effectively. Members were asked to be clear about the information, evidence and assurance they required in future papers.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

3.1 The Chair advised that members would be provided with information regarding the declaration and registration of interests.

Action1: Information on the declaration and registration of interests to be sent to members.

4. QUORUM

4.1 The Chair confirmed that the meeting was quorate with at least 50% of the independent members present.

SECTION A: FOR DISCUSSION AND DECISION

5. GOVERNING BOARD CONSTITUTION

5.1 The Chair introduced the paper setting out the regulatory expectations and level of governance maturity required to support the College's CORC application.

5.2 In response to member questions the Chair confirmed that a letter of intent had been submitted to the OfS and a meeting held with the regulator in June 2026. The College was awaiting confirmation of the requirements for its CORC application, reflecting its existing status as a registered provider. It was noted that a number of providers were reviewing their regulatory arrangements in light of new requirements relating to franchised HE provision and OfS registration.

5.3 In further discussion the Board noted that an Access and Participation Plan (APP) had been submitted to the OfS to support the College's intention to operate within the Approved (Fee Cap) category. The College's teaching model comprised a mix of in-person and online delivery. Noting the recent government and regulatory scrutiny concerning the classification of certain weekend-only HE provision for student finance purposes members were advised that the College's did not deliver provision in the evenings or at weekends.

5.4 The Chair further noted that the Board may need to meet more frequently than the scheduled four meetings to support the CORC application.

5.5 The Board **approved** the transition of the College's governance arrangements to a formal Board-led governance structure with a majority of independent members to support its CORC application.

Rod Bristow joined the meeting during this item.

6. COLLEGE PROGRESS SINCE OFS REGISTRATION

6.1 The Principal introduced a paper setting out the progress the College had made in meeting the OfS governance and management (Condition E) and quality and academic standards (Condition B) requirements.

6.2 In discussion, members welcomed the progress that had been made since OfS registration and identified a number of areas where further information and assurance would assist the Board in discharging its responsibilities. These included access to Module Evaluation Questionnaire (MEQ) data, information on the student body and its demographic profile, and evidence to support the statements and assurances contained within Board papers.

6.3 Members also discussed the importance of effective risk management and scenario planning. Questions were raised regarding the assumptions underpinning student recruitment, continuation and progression, and the extent to which the College would be able to respond should these assumptions not be realised. It was suggested that consideration be given to lessons learned from providers that had been unsuccessful in securing Approved (Fee Cap) status with the OfS.

6.4 The Board noted the importance of establishing its committee structure promptly in order to support effective oversight and assurance. A member also highlighted the need for standardised templates and guidance for Board and committee papers.

Action 2: A template and supporting guidance for Board and committee papers to be developed.

6.5 A member further emphasised the need for the Board to receive clear evidence and assurance regarding academic quality and student outcomes. Areas identified for future reporting included recruitment practices, continuation and progression metrics, student outcomes, early warning indicators of risk, assessment methodologies, and the College's approach to the use of artificial intelligence.

6.6 In response to questions, it was confirmed that the College had policies in place which were subject to regular review and that management information systems were in operation to support monitoring and reporting.

7. GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

7.1 The Chair introduced the paper setting out the proposed Governance and Management Framework for the College, including the governance structure, terms of reference, membership and meeting arrangements for the Board and the role and delegations to its committees.

7.2 Members commented that the Framework was appropriate for the Inaugural meeting. However, further work was required to develop a scheme of delegation, terms of reference and schedules of business for the Board and its committees.

Action 3: Governance framework documentation to be developed to support the CORC application.

7.3 Members further commented that, within an independent provider structure, it may be more appropriate for the Academic Board to operate as a committee of the Board. The College had greater flexibility in determining its governance arrangements than would typically be the case in a university established under separate constitutional or statutory arrangements. Members also suggested the appointment of external members to the Academic Board.

7.4 In response to questions, the Chair noted that it was intended that the committees would hold their first meetings during the current term, with their establishment to be formally confirmed by the Board at its meeting on 15 October. Expressions of interest in committee chair roles were invited.

Action 4: Independent members to submit expressions of interest for committee chair roles to the Chair of the Board by Wednesday 9 September 2026.

7.5 Members noted the significant volume of work required ahead of the CORC application and suggested that a programme plan, taking account of resourcing requirements, be developed. Members also noted the need to consider the implications should OfS approval not be obtained in time for the 2026/27 academic year, when the College intended to begin charging higher fees.

Action 5: Management to develop and present to the Board a programme plan to support the CORC application.

7.6 The Board **approved** the Governance and Management Framework.

8. RISK FRAMEWORK AND RISK APPETITE STATEMENT

8.1 The Board considered the paper setting out the proposed risk management framework for the College including risk categories, governance and oversight arrangements, risk appetite and sources of assurance for the College.

8.2 Members were broadly supportive of the risk framework and risk appetite statement and the proposed next steps for its development. Members noted the importance of understanding where assessed risk exposure exceeded the Board's agreed risk appetite and suggested that future reporting should clearly identify any such gaps. It was agreed that whilst detailed oversight would be delegated to the Audit and Risk Committee, the Board should review the risk register regularly during this phase of the College's development.

8.3 In response to questions from members, it was confirmed that the College did not recruit international students, recruiting only home and EU students. It was further confirmed that admissions requirements relating to English language proficiency were not being lowered, as had been seen in some parts of the sector, and that the relevant requirements were determined by Pearson as the awarding body

8.4 The Board **approved** the risk management framework and risk appetite statement, delegated detailed oversight to the Audit and Risk Committee and agreed that the risk framework and risk appetite statement would be reviewed annually.

9. ACADEMIC ASSURANCE FRAMEWORK

9.1 The Board considered the proposed Academic Assurance Framework, which set out the principles, sources of assurance, external review arrangements, key performance indicators, reporting arrangements and review mechanisms through which the Board would obtain assurance regarding academic quality, standards and student outcomes

9.2 In discussion, members welcomed the framework and noted the importance of ensuring that academic assurance reporting aligned with the OfS quality and standards requirements and the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF). Members requested a mapping of the framework and existing practice against the OfS Condition B requirements and the expectations of the TEF. The Board also requested a roadmap setting out how the College intended to achieve its stated ambition of securing a Gold TEF rating.

Action 6: Management to develop and present to the Board:

- **a. a mapping of academic assurance arrangements against the OfS B conditions and TEF expectations**
- **b. a roadmap to support the College's ambition of achieving a Gold TEF rating.**

9.3 The Board **approved** the Academic Assurance Framework and agreed that regular academic assurance reports together with action plans arising from external reviews be submitted to the Board for oversight and monitoring.

10. BOARD CULTURE AND CONDUCT FRAMEWORK

10.1 The Board considered the paper setting out the expected culture, behaviours and standards of conduct for the Board. It was agreed that a formal Board of Conduct should be developed to support and underpin the Framework.

Action 7: Board Code of Conduct to be developed.

10.2 The Board **approved** the Board Culture and Conduct Framework.

11. COLLEGE STRATEGY 2026–2031

11.1 The Board noted that consideration of the College's future strategy for 2026-2031 would form the focus of the Board Strategy Away Day following the meeting.

SECTION B: REPORTING

12. PRINCIPAL'S REPORT

12.1 The Board noted that relevant matters had been reported during earlier items on the agenda.

13. OFS REGISTRATION UPDATE AND NEXT STEPS

13.1 The Board noted that relevant matters had been considered under earlier items on the agenda.

14. FINANCIAL POSITION AND SUSTAINABILITY

14.1 The Board considered the paper summarising the College's financial performance, liquidity, financial forecasts and key financial risks.

14.2 While noting the positive information presented, members concluded that they required additional evidence and assurance before they could satisfy themselves that the College was meeting the expectations of the OfS management and governance (Condition E) and Financial Viability and Sustainability (Condition F) requirements. In particular, further information was requested on financial performance, liquidity, cash flow, forecasts, key assumptions and scenario planning to enable the Board to discharge its oversight responsibilities effectively.

Action 8: Future financial reporting to include management accounts, cash flow forecasts, financial projections and analysis of key financial assumptions and risks.

14.3 The Board **noted** the College's current financial position and agreed that enhanced financial reporting would be required to support effective oversight and assurance.

SECTION C: TO NOTE

15. KEY RISKS AND CONSIDERATIONS ACROSS PAPERS

15.1 The Board noted that the principal risks and considerations arising from the papers and discussions had been captured within the minutes and actions arising from the meeting.

16. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

16.1 There was no other business.

17 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

17.1 The Board **noted** the schedule of meetings for 2026/27, all of which would take place on Thursday afternoons.

- 15 October 2026 – Strategy approval and KPIs
- 21 January 2027 – Mid-year assurance
- 22 April 2027 – Strategic delivery review
- 17 July 2027 – Year-end review and forward planning

The meeting ended at 12.30pm

Dawn Turpin
Director and Consultant
Dawn Turpin Consulting Ltd

Appendix: Governing Board action log

Appendix

Governing Board Action log:

No:	**Action:**
1.	Information on the declaration and registration of interests to be sent to members.
2.	A template and supporting guidance for Board and committee papers to be developed.
3.	Governance framework documentation to be developed to support the CORC application.
4.	Independent members to submit expressions of interest for committee chair roles to the Chair of the Board by Wednesday 9 September 2026.
5.	Management to develop and present to the Board a programme plan to support the CORC application.
6.	Management to develop and present to the Board: a. a mapping of academic assurance arrangements against the OfS B conditions and TEF expectations b. a roadmap to support the College's ambition of achieving a Gold TEF rating.
7.	Board Code of Conduct to be developed.
8.	Future financial reporting to include management accounts, cash flow forecasts, financial projections and analysis of key financial assumptions and risks.