

**MINUTES OF THE 228TH MEETING OF THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS
HELD ON TUESDAY 25TH NOVEMBER 2025 AT NFTS BEACONSFIELD**

Present: Sophie Turner Laing (Chair), Paloma Baeza, Farhana Bhula, Angus Blair, Polly Cochrane, Paul Clark, Geoffrey Crossick, John Lee, Andrew McDonald, Pukar Mehta, Charlotte Moore, Laurent Samama, Caroline Silver, Jon Wardle, Adil Ray (Zoom)

Apologies: Julian Bellamy, Scott Forrest, Kate Phillips, Hilary Strong, Sue Vertue

In attendance: Ijeoma Akigwe, Stephen Louis, Trevor Hall, Mark Readman, Eleanor Wheal

Clerk: Karen Mitchell

Declarations of Interest: No new declarations of interest

	<p>Chair’s Welcome</p> <p>The Chair opened the meeting with a welcome to Aaron Porter, from Advance HE who will be observing the Board of Governors Meeting as part of the Board Effectiveness Review.</p> <p>The Chair paid tribute to Mark Readman, Director of Curriculum for his excellent work leading the curriculum revolution with the changes from MAs to MFAs and will be leaving the school in December. She also thanked Angus Blair, SU President, for his exemplary work as this would be his last meeting and highlighted his contribution to the development of the Mental Health Charter with Eleanor Wheal. The Board agreed that he had given them a real sense of the student experience.</p> <p>The Chair thanked Andy Harries and Charlotte Moore for hosting the Strategy afternoon and to Jon Wardle for putting together interesting and thought provoking sessions. The actions from the Strategy afternoon are in the Director’s report (4.1).</p>
<p>1.</p>	<p>MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING</p> <p>1.1 <u>Minutes of the NFTS Board Meeting held on 23rd September 2025</u> The minutes of the previous Board of Governors meeting held on 23rd September 2025 were approved as an accurate record.</p> <p>1.2 <u>Matters Arising</u> None.</p> <p>1.3 <u>Actions</u> <i>To develop internal processes to capture and monitor graduate progression and employment opportunities, reported under agenda item 2.4</i></p> <p>1.4 <u>Minutes of the Special Meeting held on 15th October 2025</u> The minutes of the Special Meeting held on 15th October 2025 were noted.</p>

2. STRATEGY

2.1 Update on Expanding Beaconsfield Studios

Jon Wardle presented an update on the expansion of the Beaconsfield Campus, advising members that breaking ground is now close to starting at the beginning of January. The focus continues on closing the fundraising for the Build (phase 2) by the end of January 2026, and there are positive conversations in progress with a number of donors. After this, the focus will be on raising funds for the stage 3 equip and fit out.

Jon Wardle informed members that the School is now being sent the final design documents, and a plan is in place with allocated internal and external expert reviewers to ensure that the right expert is feeding back on each document.

In response to member's questions on the risk of the building not opening on time for the new student intake in January 2027, Jon Wardle advised on the contingency plan in place. He explained the main risk would be on the commitment to students with disabilities for specialist accommodation. This will be monitored closely to the summer when outcomes are known and decisions can be made.

The report was **noted**.

2.2 Marketing and Communications Strategy Update

Ijeoma Akigwe updated members on the first year's activity of the PR agency, appointed by the Board in December 2024 to support the work of the Marketing and External Relations team.

She informed the Board that work to date has primarily focused on communicating key messages of celebrating success, the School's future expansion plans and highlighting impact through the news agenda, highlighting graduate achievements at awards and film festivals and educating press, industry, and consumer audiences about the School's unique contribution to the creative industries. The key challenges in the first year were outlined but foundations had been laid to support sustained growth and awareness with the wider media.

In looking forward, Ijeoma Akigwe explained that the Agency will focus on a high impact big idea that will capture national attention. She confirmed the cost would remain the same for the next year at £40k. Members discussed the report including the need for a key story plan by month and setting KPIs.

It was **Agreed** to continue with the PR Agency for a further 12 months subject to the above.

2.3 Sean Connery Talent Lab Years 4-6 Draft Proposal

Jon Wardle presented his report on the longer term future for the Sean Connery Talent Lab. He explained the plan is to develop the vision for Spring 2026 to execute from April 2027 and took the Board through the draft highlights of the vision and rationale.

His plan is to bring the final proposal to the Board meeting in February 2026. Following a comprehensive discussion and feedback on the draft vision

	<p>The report was noted.</p> <p>2.4 <u>Graduate Transitions Survey</u> Jon Wardle set the scene from the last Board meeting in September regarding the Graduate Destination data, and the conversation regarding the need for better information. Eleanor Wheal and Jon Wardle, with support from Paul Clark and Geoffrey Crossick developed the Graduate Transition Survey.</p> <p>Eleanor Wheal explained that the survey had been sent to all students graduating in February 2025. She informed members that the response rate was currently at 50%, and outlined the actions taken to improve this.</p> <p>Eleanor Wheal presented highlights from the survey with; 84% of graduates in employment, and the majority related to their studies; 73% working freelance and mainly in London and the South East. She explained the survey enabled drilling down by course and reported on specific sample course responses.</p> <p>Jon Wardle outlined three actions that would be put in place as a result of the survey:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Alumni mentoring and networking support 2. Prioritising 'red' responses with a personalised phone call to offer support 3. Sharing responses with Heads of Departments for specific interventions <p>Members agreed this was an excellent piece of work and thanked those involved.</p> <p>The report was noted.</p>
<p>3. UPDATES FROM COMMITTEES</p>	<p>3.1 <u>Minutes from the Audit Committee</u> Caroline Silver presented the minutes of the Audit Committee meeting held on 11th November 2025. She advised the Board that BDO, External Auditors had presented the Audit Completion Report with a clean audit opinion for the School. The Board congratulated Trevor Hall and team on the audit outcome.</p> <p>She confirmed that the Audit Committee were recommending approval of the Financial Statements for the year ended 31st July 2025 and for the letter of representation to be signed.</p> <p>Following annual policy review, the Safeguarding Policy and the Modern Slavery Policy were approved by the Committee. She informed the Board that the Committee will be considering the risk of 3rd parties to the School and reputation where there is no direct control, highlighting the Modern Slavery Statement as an example.</p> <p>Caroline Silver reported that over the course of the year, the Audit Committee will be undertaking a schedule of deep dive activities against key risks on the Risk Register.</p> <p>The PREVENT Annual Return and Student Protection Plan was approved.</p>

She confirmed that the Audit Committee is comfortable and confident to recommend to the Board that the annual statements be approved.

The report was **noted**.

3.2 Minutes from F&GP Committee (LS)

Laurent Samama presented the minutes of the F&GP Committee meeting held on 10th November 2025. He advised following in-depth scrutiny the F&GP Committee were recommending the following to the Board:

- Approval of the Financial Statements for the year ended 31st July 2025
- Approval of BDO's Audit Completion Report and Management responses for the year ended 31st July 2025
- Approval of the OfS Annual Financial Return 2025 and commentary

He also informed members that the F&GP Committee had approved the 2025 TRAC Return for submission to the OfS.

Laurent Samama reported to the Board that the Committee had reviewed the Management Accounts for the two months to September 30th 2025 and highlighted a specific risk with liquidity. He explained that £1.5m previously deposited with Barclays was required by Lloyds Bank as additional security against the Bank Guarantee of funds to purchase Grosvenor House and this would put pressure on the School's liquidity over the next twelve months but would remain well above the OfS Reportable event threshold. He confirmed there are additional management processes in place to carefully monitor the position.

Jon Wardle reminded the Board that this specific issue would dissipate with the realisation of the £1.6m fundraising.

A comprehensive discussion followed on the governance process in the event of the threshold being breached. It was **agreed**:

Action: Jon Wardle and Trevor Hall to circulate the breach of threshold plan to members.

The report was **noted**.

3.3 Minutes from the Academic Standards Committee

The minutes were **noted**.

3.4 Report from GAR and NFTS Honorary Fellowship Award

Sophie Turner Laing presented a verbal report on the GAR Committee meeting held on 19th November 2025 noting that Charlotte Moore had joined the Committee.

She highlighted the focus on recruiting new governors to replace those governors who have reached the end of their final term next year. She updated members on the search for a new academic governor to replace Geoff Crossick, the industry replacement for Laurent Samama, and an academic CFO to replace Patrick Fuller next year when their respective terms as governors comes to an end. It was also noted that Hilary Strong will take over as Chair of F&GP in March 2026 and

	<p>become a member of GAR. There remains a vacancy for a governor to represent disability, which the Chair and Charlotte Moore are progressing.</p> <p>Sophie Turner Laing drew attention to the review of the diversity of the Board, which was benchmarked against the Advance HE report of December 2024. She reported that 41% of NFTS members are women (BM 43.4%), 9% of NFTS members are from BAME backgrounds (BM 15.2%), 4.5% of NFTS members had disclosed a disability (BM 5.8%). She acknowledged that there is still further work to do and the diversity of the Board continues to be an important consideration in recruitment of new governors.</p> <p>Sophie Turner Laing reported back on her individual conversations with members and highlighted some of the feedback which included: the admiration and respect for Jon Wardle and the Executive team, the agility of the Board to cope in a crisis with suggestions for scenario planning at the next Strategy Day, discussions on AI, debate on Board discussions, and suggestions for the induction programme. She thanked members for their time and the suggestions which she and Jon Wardle will further consider and action.</p> <p>Sophie Turner Laing explained to members the process for awarding the NFTS Honorary Fellowship. She explained how the nominations were considered with the rationale for the recommendation. She informed members that in recognition of their exceptional achievements and lasting contribution to both the screen industries and the NFTS, it is proposed that Shaheen Baig and Jina Jay are jointly awarded the NFTS Fellowship in 2026.</p> <p>Following discussion, it was</p> <p>RESOLVED: To award the NFTS Fellowship in 2026 to Shaheen Baig and Jina Jay.</p> <p>Action: Jon Wardle to write to Shaheen Baig and Jina Jay.</p> <p>3.5 <u>Draft minutes from the Expansion Development Committee</u> It was agreed that this was covered in previous items and the minutes were noted.</p>
<p>4. REPORTS</p>	<p>4.1 <u>Director's Report</u></p> <p>Jon Wardle updated the Board on his activities since the last Board meeting. He followed up on the Board Strategy Day and actions that are actively being worked on, including the Student Mental Health Charter for January 2026, and a gap analysis on AI by discipline.</p> <p>Jon Wardle advised members on the Post-16 Education and Skills White Paper, drawing attention to key issues and themes pertinent to the School. These included: alignment with government priorities, opportunities through Skills Bootcamps and the Growth and Skills Levy, validation of the School's specialist model, and the expansion of Lifelong Learning and modular studies expected to roll out to level 7 in the future.</p> <p>He highlighted a funding risk to be managed from the planned <i>International Student Levy</i> which would be loss of income to the School from January 2027.</p>

There was a comprehensive discussion on both options in consultation; £1k flat fee per student or the 6% levy per student. It was agreed that the funding risk for both options should be modelled. Jon Wardle confirmed that this was being tracked and he would bring an update to the Board meetings in February and June 2026.

Action: Jon Wardle to bring an update on the funding risk from the planned *International Student Levy* to the Board meeting in February and June 2026.

Jon Wardle updated members on student recruitment for January 2026 noting that the School is in a strong position to meet student recruitment forecasts for January 2026 and for the 2025/26 overall academic year. He advised that international student recruitment is down slightly, and he has worked with Trevor Hall to mitigate the income loss.

Jon Wardle updated the Board on the future of a programme at the School and progress with key partner sponsor agreements.

Following comprehensive discussion

The Report was **noted**.

4.2 Finance Director's Report

Trevor Hall presented an update to members on major finance activities and deliverables since the last meeting. He advised that the financial performance was currently tracking to budget and reiterated the liquidity risk previously discussed in 3.2. The financial forecast is in line with budget and the School remains on target to deliver its forecast for 2025/26.

After discussion the report was **noted**.

4.3 Student Union Report

Angus Blair presented his final report as Student Union President to the Board highlighting the year's achievements which have included: Alumni connections, changes to the physical environment, development of societies, clubs and Min-Springboard, events and the Mental Health Charter. He concluded with forthcoming activities and thanked Board members for their support.

Members congratulated Angus Blair on the achievements and thanked him for his work as Student Union President.

The report was **noted**.

4.4 Curriculum and Short Course Report

Mark Readman provided members with an update on key curriculum activities since the last meeting. His report covered curriculum activity, updates on short courses, development of new courses and curriculum operations. He advised members that the NFTS Leeds Hub has been renamed to NFTS North to reflect the geographical spread of the Hub's activities.

Mark Readman highlighted the programme approval and validation activity that had taken place, providing a comprehensive and helpful appendix for members.

Following discussion the report was **noted**

The Board thanked Mark Readman again for his work on the curriculum at the School and wished him well for the future.

4.5 OfS Accountability and PREVENT Return

Trevor Hall presented the 2025 OFS Annual Financial (which includes the financial statements and Annual Financial Return) and PREVENT Return to members for approval, noting that these had been recommended for approval to the Board by the Audit and F&GP Committees.

4.5.1 Annual Financial Statements

RESOLVED: To Authorise the Chair and Director of the School to sign the financial statements and letter of representation for the year ended 31 July 2025, on behalf of the Board.

4.5.2 External Auditors Audit Completion Report

See 4.5.1

4.5.3 Audit Letter of Representation

See 4.5.1

4.5.4 OfS Annual Financial Return including Commentary

RESOLVED: To Approve the submission of the 2025 OFS Annual Financial Return and commentary.

4.5.5 Annual PREVENT Return

RESOLVED: To authorise the Chair of Audit Committee to sign the OFS Annual PREVENT Return for the year ended 31 July 2025, on behalf of the Board.

4.6 Annual Quality Assurance Evaluation Report

Geoffrey Crossick summarised the Quality Assurance Evaluation Report and process explaining that the report is written to assist the Board of Governors in determining whether the student experience, outcomes and academic standards are appropriately overseen, monitored and at an appropriate level. It also enables the Board to be assured that the School's ongoing Conditions of Registration in respect of quality and standards are being met.

Geoffrey Crossick informed the Board on the process that had taken place at the special meeting of the Academic Standards Committee on July 23rd 2025. He noted that Polly Cochrane and Paul Clark had attended as independent governors with Jon Wardle and Angus Blair also in attendance. He explained the key documents used to review the report. This included: External Examiner Reports, Annual Course Evaluations, Annual Student Survey, Student Course Evaluations and review of the OfS B3 Condition Outcomes and Threshold data.

	<p>Following detailed consideration of the report, it was agreed by the Board members present at the Academic Standards Committee Special Meeting that assurances could be provided to the Board in respect of the student academic experience, student outcomes and the standards of the School's awards. Geoffrey Crossick paid tribute to Eleanor Wheal and the team for an excellent assurance process and reporting that it is a good practice model for other institutions.</p> <p>After discussion the Report was noted.</p> <p>4.7 <u>Annual Audit Committee Report</u> Trevor Hall presented the Annual Audit Committee Report.</p> <p>The report was noted.</p> <p>4.8 <u>Modern Slavery Statement 2025</u> Trevor Hall presented the Modern Slavery Statement 2025. The statement has been reviewed by Audit Committee and is recommended to the Board for approval.</p> <p>RESOLVED: To approve the Modern Slavery Statement 2025.</p>
5.	<p>AOB</p> <p>5.1 <u>Changes to Board Effects</u> The Clerk advised the Board that changes to accessing Board Effect is due to take place on February 7th 2026. Members will receive an activation email and Sarah Collins will provide guidance on required actions nearer the time.</p> <p>5.2 <u>Completion Update on Company House Identification Verification</u> Members were reminded to complete any outstanding Company House Identification Verifications and send to Trevor Hall.</p>
	<p>Date of Next Meeting: Tuesday 24th February 2026 at 10.30, NFTS, Beaconsfield</p>
6.	<p>Board Briefing</p> <p>6.1 <u>Producing</u> Milly Pope, second year Producing student reflected on her studies, the films she had created during this time, the collaborative relationships she developed and her work experience placements. Members were pleased to hear about her experiences and provided excellent advice on moving into the industry. The Board thanked her for sharing her student experience and wished her well when she graduates early next year.</p>