



Minutes of the Meeting of the Audit Committee

held at 4.00pm on Wednesday 12 March 2025
held in the College

Present:	Mr S Taylor (ST) Mr F Ahmed (FA) Ms C Ajit Singh (CAS) M M Othi (MO)	Chair
In Attendance:	Mr M Cooper (MC) Ms L Stewart (LS) Ms K Frost (KF) Mr C Montgomery (CM)	Executive Director Finance, HR and Development Interim Executive Director Resources Head of Governance WBG

1/25 **Welcome and Apologies**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were made. There were no apologies for absence. It was noted that the meeting was quorate.

2/25 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest relating to the items on the agenda.

3/25 **Data Protection Update**

A report from the recent Data Protection review (Paper 3) was received in advance of the meeting. Overall the review had found that policies and procedures were robust but some updates were required and certain gaps needed to be addressed. Managers in key areas were knowledgeable, proactive and keen to adopt best practice. There was strong awareness among staff but low reporting of data breaches which suggested further action was needed. A need for further training was identified. Risk levels ranged from low to moderate, there were no high risk areas.

The next step was for MC to work through the action plan, prioritise key tasks and collaborate with college managers for implementation.

Governors said that improved controls would significantly increase notifications, particularly in the initial stages. MC emphasised that, as incidents were not currently being reported, this indicated that necessary actions and controls might not be in place.

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Governors noted that the report generally read well but assumed prior knowledge and understanding. They also highlighted that abbreviations were used frequently throughout, which might impact clarity.

Governors suggested use of the staff newsletter to improve communication about data protection moving forward.

Governors highlighted that in the Individual Rights Self-Assessment of Compliance the right to erasure and the right to data portability were both rated poor in terms of compliance. MC said he would be following up on this as part of the next steps.

It was agreed to review progress towards the implementation plan at the next meeting of the committee.

4/25 **Minutes of the Last Meeting**

a) **Minutes of the Last Meeting**

Minutes from the meeting of the Committee held on 27 November 2024 had been received in advance (Paper 4). IT WAS DECIDED the minutes were a true record of the meeting and they were approved.

b) **Matters Arising**

The Committee reviewed progress towards the actions from the last meeting:

31a/24: In progress. Updates had been made and further input from colleagues was being sought to add more detail on assuring the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.

31b/24: Completed.

35/24: Completed. The tender process for the internal auditor was underway.

5/25 **Risk Management**

a) **Risk Register**

The 'Risk Register (Paper 5a) was received in advance of the meeting. Changes since the last meeting of the committee included:

- A new risk had been added: Risk 26 'Recruitment and Retention of Leadership'.
- Oversight for Risk 20: Competition for Students had moved to the CQSE Committee.
- Risk 3 had been updated following the recent Ofsted grade.

Following the last FRCP Committee meeting, Risk 15 Facility Integrity would be expanded to cover ongoing maintenance and a new risk would be added covering allegations against staff or management for inappropriate behaviour.

The committee discussed Risk 3 Deterioration of Ofsted Rating and whether this was a risk itself or the outcome of other risks. It was suggested it was a reputational risk that everything else fed into.

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The committee discussed whether to lower the likelihood score for the Data Protection Compliance risk following the recent review which found no high risk areas. It was agreed to leave the score as it was at this stage but to review it again at the next meeting once work had been undertaken on the Data Protection action plan.

b) **Cyber Security Risk Register**

The 'IT Risk Register' (Paper 5c) was received in advance of the meeting.

It was noted that Cyber Security presented some serious risks to the College so it would be important to get it right. Mitigation for the risks had been put in place but there was still more to do and further actions would be taken before the end of the academic year.

The committee discussed what further assurance was required. It was noted the College was working towards Cyber Essentials and once that was achieved they would work towards the Cyber Essentials + accreditation. This would provide a level of external assurance. There would also be a follow up internal audit later in the year to review progress towards actions identified in the recent Cyber Security internal audit.

Governors asked whether the level of risk had improved since the internal audit. LS said it hadn't improved due to volatility in the IT department. However, the team were committed to improvements.

LS left the meeting at 4.50pm

6/25 **Internal Audit**

a) **Internal Audit Reports**

i) **Budgetary and Financial Reporting**

The 'Internal Audit Report: Budgetary and Financial Reporting' (Paper 6ai) was received in advance of the meeting. CM reported that the overall conclusion was 'substantial' with two medium recommendations, one low recommendation and two observations. There was a similar number of recommendations to other colleges.

Governors asked if there was an opportunity to automate the production of the monthly management accounts so it wasn't so labour intensive. MC said the College had purchased additional software for their accounting system to act as a link between Excel and the system which should streamline the process.

Governors said if this didn't work, it might be an idea to speak to the vendor about whether the system could be further improved or to look at alternative solutions. They also questioned why there was a need to use Excel for management accounts which could be produced by the system. MC said that there were some elements of the management accounts pack that could not be reported directly from the College's accounting system. Excel was also used to improve the presentation.

Governors asked whether thought was being given to improving communication about the budget setting process. MC explained that budget holders were meeting with the Head of Finance to review the process and understand changes for next year.

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Governors asked about the cause of delays in the production of management accounts. MC said the delays had been largely due to the shortage of staff. The team were in a better position now and were up to date in transaction processing.

FA and MO left the meeting.

It was noted that the meeting was no longer quorate and agreed that discussions would continue on an informal basis.

Governors discussed the use of questionnaires in the internal audit, expressing concern about the number of respondents and saying they would be concerned if an entire audit was completed on the back of a questionnaire. CM said the questionnaires gave an opportunity to get feedback from people involved which helped inform the audit opinion but the opinion wasn't solely based on the responses given.

Governors asked if questionnaires were sent directly to staff by the auditors. CM explained the link to the questionnaire was sent by the Head of Finance to all senior budget holders but the questionnaires were completed online and were anonymous.

ii) HR Recruitment and Retention

The 'Internal Audit Report: HR Recruitment and Retention' (Paper 6b) was received in advance of the meeting.

CM reported that the overall conclusion was 'strong'. There were no recommendations and two observations. There was a lower number of recommendations compared to other colleges.

Governors said they were pleased the conclusion was good overall and that there were no recommendations.

CM left the meeting.

b) Update on Recommendations from Previous Audits

An update on recommendations from previous audits was received in advance of the meeting. (Paper 6b).

MC explained that out of the six recommendations shown, one had now been implemented. Of the five outstanding recommendations, three were rated medium priority and two low priority. Work was underway on addressing them although it was noted that the implementation dates for estates management and cyber security recommendations had slipped due to staffing issues.

c) Confirm Internal Audit Plan 2024-25

A paper about the internal audit plan for 2024-25 was received in advance of the meeting (Paper 6c). It was noted that a decision couldn't be made as the committee meeting wasn't quorate.

7/25 Whistleblowing Policy

The 'Whistleblowing Policy' (Paper 7) was received in advance of the meeting. It was noted that there were no changes proposed to the policy. The policy would be on the agenda of the next Corporation meeting for approval.

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8/25 Training Needs

It was decided to defer the agenda item to the next meeting of the committee.

9/25 Audit Tender Process

A paper outlining the proposed internal audit tender process (Paper 9) was received in advance of the meeting.

Governors reviewed the draft audit criteria and weightings and were satisfied with the response noting that one of the requirements would be that a certain number of audits would be carried out on site. Governors asked for presentations to be included as part of the tender process.

10/25 Key Points from the Meeting

- Data Protection: The committee reviewed the report from the recent review of Data Protection, the reports are available on Governor Hub. The next step will be for MC to go through the action plan and prioritise key tasks. All of the actions are low or moderate risk, there were no high risk areas identified.
- Internal Audit Reports: Two internal audit reports were considered at the meeting: Budgetary and Financial Reporting and HR Recruitment and Retention. Budgetary and Financial Reporting received a 'substantial' conclusion with two medium recommendations and one low. HR Recruitment and Retention received a 'strong' conclusion with no recommendations.
- IT Risk Register: Cyber security presents some serious risks to the College. Mitigation for the risks has been put in place but there is still more to do. Further actions will be taken before the end of the academic year.
- Quorum: As the meeting ceased to be quorate part of the way through, the formal meeting had to end and discussions continued on an informal basis.

11/25 Date of the Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting of the Committee was Wednesday 25 June 2025 at 4.00pm.

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Summary of Actions

No.	Action	Lead	Target Date
31a/24	Update the Board Assurance Framework to extend the date range covered, ensure each area has a tick for an assurance activity and to add more detail about the HMIs and education improvement consultants involved in assuring the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.	MC	Initial: Mar 25 Revised: Jun 25
31c/24	Arrange some training on the topic of fraud.	MC	Initial: Mar 25 Revised: June 25

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