

APPROVED Minutes



The University of Manchester

**FINANCE COMMITTEE**

**24 September 2025**

**Present:** Mr David Buckley (Chair), Ms Lexie Baynes, Mr Guy Grainger, Dr Reinmar Hager, Ms Philippa Hird.

**In attendance for all items:** Patrick Hackett (Registrar, Secretary and Chief Operating Officer), Carol Prokopszyn (Chief Financial Officer), George Whalley (Deputy CFO) and Kate Brown (Governance Manager) (minutes).

**In attendance for Item 10:** Barra Mac Ruairí (Chief Property Officer), Simon Merrywest (Executive Director for the Student Experience) and Gemma Mossop (Head of Corporate Finance)

**In attendance for Item 11:** Ash Field (Head of Pensions)

**Apologies:** Matt Atkin, Professor Duncan Ivison, Mr Paul Thwaite

**1      Welcome and Declarations of Interest**

**Noted:** Item 11 Pensions Annual Update - Carol Prokopszyn declared that she is the employer representative on the UCEA Joint Negotiating Committee.

**2      Committee Business:**

**2.1     Minutes of the previous meeting: 2 July 2025**

**Received and Noted:** the minutes of the previous meeting held on 2 July 2025.

**Agreed:** to approve the minutes of the previous meeting.

**2.2     Matters Arising**

**Received:** the actions list.

**Noted:**

- a) There will be a discussion about who takes forward any actions currently attributed to John Holden in his previous role.
- b) It had been anticipated that a number of actions, e.g. Financial Shocks paper, would be completed in time for this meeting, however in order to provide deeper insight these had been delayed. The Financial Shocks paper would be presented to the next meeting and the action updated to reflect this.

**3      The Student Priority: The Cost of Living, or The Cost of Survival?**

**Received:** a report on key financial costs of being a student in 2025.

**Noted:**

- a) Research, conducted by the Students' Union and other providers, consistently highlights the low level of maintenance loans compared to the actual costs incurred by students. SU research shows that the costs for students to 'get on and get by' in their first term at university, spanning from September to January, can be around £924 a month more than the average maintenance loan amount.
- b) Over two-thirds of students have taken on paid work during term time; which in turn impacts their ability to engage with other areas of university life and the student experience.
- c) Members comments included
  - i. The competitiveness of the University's offer to students against competitors in regards to bursaries, prices, etc, and how this is communicated to students.
  - ii. How the University positions itself in terms of offering Value for Money to students and ensuring they understand what their fees pay for.
  - iii. The importance of ensuring that staff understand all the various offers available for support and are able to inform students.

## 4 2024/25 P12 Management Accounts

**Received:** an overview of the July 2025 management accounts position.

**Noted:**

- a) The University remained in a favourable position with the underlying contribution [REDACTED] favourable to budget. There was a strong cash position with [REDACTED] headroom to liquidity target.
- b) Compared to 2023/24, income has increased by 4%, whereas costs have only increased by 2%.
- c) All three Faculties and Professional Services are reporting favourable variances to budget for the year with the downsides on tuition fee income offset by reduced costs and additional investment income.
- d) There was discussion about the continuing impact of vacancy rates on the favourable variances. Budget assumptions have been adjusted for the 2025/26 budget to take account of positions not filled until later in the academic year but there is still work to do in this area.
- e) There was also some discussion of the cultural behaviours behind budgeting and forecasting and that this would be an area for consideration.

## 5 Tax Strategy

**Received and Noted:** the updated Tax Strategy for 2025. Under UK legislation, the University is required to produce a tax strategy which needs to be updated annually and be publicly available.

**Agreed:** to approve the updated Tax Strategy.

## 6 Treasury

### 6.1 Treasury Annual Update

**Received and Noted:** the Treasury annual update which outlines the treasury management activities, compliance, and updates aligned with the

Treasury Management Policy. It covers financing strategies, banking relationships, deposits, audit findings, and staffing changes within the Treasury team.

## 6.2 Treasury Cash Strategy – High Level Proposal

**Received:** a proposal that the University increases its maximum threshold for investing in Money Market Funds [REDACTED].

**Noted:**

- a) Finance Committee considered and approved a proposal that the University increases its maximum threshold for investing in Money Market Funds [REDACTED]
- b) The University's investment advisors Mercer were asked to consider the University's current treasury arrangements and provide advice on short-term funds: They recommended that cash required for short-term operational expenditure requirements should be held in Money Market Funds.
- c) The amount of [REDACTED] was suggested based on the University cash holdings at 30 June 2025.

**Agreed:** to approve that the University increases its maximum threshold for investing in Money Market Funds from £70m to £200m.

## 6.3 Treasury Management Policy

**Received:** the updated Treasury Management Policy.

**Noted:**

- a) The Treasury Management Policy is due to be reviewed annually by Committee. It was last reviewed in September 2024.
  - A number of amendments were proposed including revised borrowing covenants, amendments to the presentation and to roles and responsibilities
  - The following recommendations approved by Finance Committee in April 2025 have also been included:
    - I. to reduce the liquidity measure from 90 days operating expenditure to 60 days operating expenditure.
    - II. to reduce the long-term credit rating for building societies from A to A- [REDACTED]
    - III. to allow an increase to our primary relationship bank counterparty limit from [REDACTED] for no more than a period of three months in any financial year.
  - The increase the University's holding in Money Market Funds to a maximum [REDACTED] (approved at Minute 6.2) has also been included.

**Agreed:** to approve the updated Policy.

## 7 Endowments

### 7.1 Endowment budget 2025-26

**Received and Noted:** the proposed endowments budget for 2025/26.

**Agreed:** to approve the endowments budget for 2025/26.

## 7.2 Endowment Total Return resolutions for new permanent endowments

**Received:** a proposal for the adoption of a total return approach for all new permanent endowments received in the financial year 2024/25.

**Noted:**

- a) On 10 October 2024, the Board approved the adoption of a "total return" approach for the University's permanent endowment funds. This resolution became effective for all existing permanent endowments as of 1 August 2024.
- b) No such resolution could be adopted for future endowments. Therefore, this resolution covers all new permanent endowments received between 1 August 2024 and 31 July 2025.

**Agreed:** to recommend approval by the Board of Governors the adoption of a total return approach for all new permanent endowments received in the financial year 2024/25.

## 8 CFO Update

**Received:** an update from the CFO which covers:

- 2025/26 early financial indicators
- Government activity
- Audit 24/25
- Power of Attorney report

## 9 Capital Programme Report

**Received:** the report on capital projects within Finance Committee's purview (over £10m).

**Noted:**

- a) The Limes was the only project with a red rating, with the project now on hold. The project is linked to the Residences Redevelopment programme.
- b) The Biological Science Facility (BSF) was still an ongoing issue. The development of the Faculty strategy would drive the requirements for the facility going forward. In the meantime, the team was managing the ongoing risks.

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## 11 Annual Pension Update

**Received:** an overview of our pension schemes, with updates on actuarial valuations and de-risking activity.

**Noted:**

- a) USS remains strong with £10b surplus. There are ongoing discussions on how this surplus should be used. The employer contribution rate is currently 14.5% which is lower than previous years.
- b) UMSS was now 80% funded and steps were being taken to derisk the investment portfolio. The University was in the process of outsourcing the admin for the UMSS to a third party which would reduce the risk.
- c) GMPF funding position had improved and the University was working with GMPF to derisk the investments. Only a small number of staff remained in this scheme.

## 12 Committee Information

## **12.1 Terms of Reference & Membership**

**Received and Noted:** the current terms of reference and membership.

## **12.2 Forward Agenda 2025-26**

**Received and Noted** the Forward Agenda.

## **13 Dates of Future Meetings**

### **Received and Noted:**

The meeting dates for 2025/26 are:

05 November 2025, 1030-1300; joint meeting with ARC, 1300-1330 both online

04 February 2026, 1030-1300 in person

05 May 2026, 1030-1300 online

01 July 2026, 1030-1300 in person