APPROVED

HUMANITIES FACULTY EXECUTIVEFACULTY EXECUTIVE (FE)
Minutes dated: 22 September 2026

Members Present: Alec Severs (AS – Items 1 and 2), Alvin Birdi (AB), Claire Alexander (CA), Clare Northen (CN), Dimitris Papadimitriou (DP), Fiona Devine (FD - Chair), Fiona Lynch (FL), Fiona Smyth (FS), James Evans (JE), Juup Stelma (JS – Item 2 onwards, delegate for KN), Kathryn Howard (KH), Kenneth McPhail (KP), Maggie Gale (MG), Sarah Featherstone (SF – delegate for ER), Suzanne Cotterill (SC), Vicky Skinner (VS)

Apologies: Emma Rose (ER), Khalid Nadvi (KN)

In attendance for all items: Steph Beck (SB - Secretary)

In attendance for: Item 2 Service Improvement Hannah Rundle (HR), Item 3 Manchester Online Dawid Rheeder (DR), and Item 4 Future Foundations Sophie Theis (ST) and Georgina Lewis-Vasco (GLV)

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1. Welcome and apologies

Noted:

a) Apologies were received from ER and KN.
b) FD welcomed AS, in his role as Faculty of Humanities Officer, who will attend FE on a regular basis as part of ongoing engagement arrangements with the Students' Union.
c) The FE recorded its thanks to VS for her significant contribution to the Faculty during her three and a half years in post and wished her well for her forthcoming move to the FSE.
d) FD welcomed CN, who will take up the Director of Faculty Finance role from 1 October 2026.

2. Service Improvement

Received: a presentation from HR, providing an overview of the University Service Improvement programme and associated Professional Services transformation activity.

Noted:

a) The Service Improvement programme forms part of the University's three-year work package and is intended to support delivery of the Manchester 2035 Strategy through both continuous service improvement activity and longer-term consideration of future Professional Services operating models.
b) The programme is intended to improve experiences for students, colleagues and partners, increase organisational sustainability, support digital and AI adoption, and enhance the working experience of Professional Services staff.
c) Current work includes a programme of incremental service improvements alongside a number of strategic reviews and discovery activities focused on areas including operations, technical services, communications and marketing.
d) Discovery activity is being undertaken to develop a better understanding of existing Professional Services structures, functions and operating models before any future design activity is considered.
e) FE discussed the importance of ensuring service design is informed by the experiences of students, colleagues and external partners, and emphasised the need for robust engagement throughout the programme.
f) Members highlighted the importance of maintaining strong alignment between Professional Services and academic operating models, ensuring that future changes support the delivery of teaching, research and social responsibility priorities.

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g) FE discussed the balance between local flexibility and institutional consistency, noting concerns regarding the cumulative impact of service centralisation and change activity on Schools and Faculties.
h) Members emphasised the importance of addressing known operational challenges and improving confidence in Professional Services through visible service improvements alongside longer-term transformation activity.
i) FE welcomed the governance arrangements established for the programme and the opportunities for Faculty engagement through the steering group, advisory board and wider consultation activity.

Agreed:
a) To continue Faculty engagement in the development of Professional Services operating model principles and future transformation activity.
b) To receive further updates as the programme develops, including progress on service improvements and discovery activity.

3. Manchester Online

Received: a presentation from DR, providing an update on the Manchester Online programme and mobilisation activity following the appointment of the University's delivery partner Risepoint.

Noted:
a) The Manchester Online partnership formally entered the implementation and mobilisation phase in September 2026 and workstreams are now being established across the University.
b) Initial activity is focused on areas including programme development, marketing, technology, systems integration and governance arrangements.
c) Governance structures have been established to oversee delivery of the programme, including reporting through existing University governance arrangements and the development of an academic sub-group.
d) FE discussed the proposed academic operating model and noted that a consistent University-wide approach would be developed for online learning, whilst retaining appropriate flexibility for programme-specific requirements.
e) Members highlighted the importance of ensuring meaningful academic engagement in the development of learning design, pedagogy, assessment approaches and programme content.
f) FE considered the implications for academic workload and noted that programme development activity would be phased, with the most significant academic content development expected from early 2027 onwards.
g) Members discussed the importance of maintaining programme quality, student experience, accessibility and inclusivity within the online learning environment.
h) FE noted that equality impact assessments are being undertaken as part of programme development and that accessibility considerations will form a core component of programme design.
i) Members discussed future programme selection, scalability and recruitment assumptions, noting that programme prioritisation would continue to be informed by market analysis and student demand.
j) FE considered arrangements for tuition fee setting and noted the intention to develop a University-wide approach for Manchester Online programmes.
k) Members noted proposals to review existing online provision across the University and to consider opportunities for future inclusion within the Manchester Online operating model where appropriate.
l) FE welcomed the progress made to date and the opportunities for ongoing Faculty engagement as the programme develops.

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Agreed:

a) To support continued Faculty participation in the development of academic design principles, governance arrangements and programme planning.
b) To receive further updates as programme development progresses.

4. Future Foundations

Received: A presentation from ST and GLV, providing an update on Future Foundations implementation and organisational readiness activity.

Noted:

a) Progress made in establishing delegated access arrangements for Academic Line Managers, Student Ambassadors, Graduate Teaching Assistants and Deputy Heads of Department.
b) The approach adopted for delegated access roles within School Operations teams to support onboarding and offboarding activities while maintaining appropriate confidentiality arrangements.
c) Progress in identifying line management arrangements for Graduate Teaching Assistants and Student Ambassadors, recognising that some arrangements remain transitional pending wider future developments.
d) Emerging themes from change impact assessment activity, including onboarding and offboarding processes, line manager responsibilities, absence management, approval workflows, casual worker arrangements and local process alignment.
e) The importance of supporting managers through implementation, particularly in relation to sickness absence management and new system responsibilities.
f) Planned communications, training activity and readiness assessments to support implementation and adoption across the Faculty.
g) The key Oracle Fusion cutover dates and associated operational implications.

Agreed:

a) To continue monitoring implementation readiness and delegated access arrangements through existing governance structures.

5. Rankings Performance

Received: An update from FL, on University and Faculty performance in national and international rankings.

Noted:

a) The University's current performance across major global and domestic rankings and the stabilisation of recent declines in certain international league tables.
b) The Faculty’s mixed performance across subject areas, with notable strengths in several disciplines alongside opportunities for improvement in others.
c) The importance of research impact, citations, reputation, research income and student experience as key contributors to rankings performance.
d) Ongoing work to improve citation performance, including supporting highly cited researchers and increasing awareness of publication and dissemination practices.
e) The importance of maintaining improvements in NSS and wider student experience indicators to support performance in domestic league tables.
f) Current activity to support participation in reputation surveys and strengthen engagement with alumni and external stakeholders.
g) Opportunities to use rankings data more strategically to inform Faculty planning and investment decisions.

Agreed:

a) To continue supporting activity aimed at improving research impact, reputation and student experience measures.

Item	Topic
6.	**Roundtable and AOB**

Noted:

a) An update was received on planning for the forthcoming Board of Governors engagement activity on 18 November 2026. Members were asked to think about potential themes and areas of Faculty focus for Board engagement.

Agreed:

a) To progress preparations for the Board of Governors engagement activity.

Next meeting: 6 October 2026