HUMANITIES FACULTY EXECUTIVE (FE)
3 November 2026

Members present: Fiona Devine (FD, Chair), Alvin Birdi (AB), Dimitris Papadimitriou (DP), James Evans (JE), Kenneth McPhail (KP), Khalid Nadvi (KN), Maggie Gale (MG), Suzanne Cotterill (SC), Emma Rose (ER), Claire Alexander (CA), Fiona Lynch (FL), Fiona Smyth (FS) and Kathryn Howard (KH)

Apologies: Alec Severs (AS) and Clare Northen (CN)

In attendance: Kate McNamee and Simon Merrywest for item 2: CME and PACE update

Secretary: Gemma Keaveney (GK)

1 Welcome, apologies and procedural matters

Noted:

- The Chair welcomed members and confirmed that the usual briefing note had been circulated.
- The Professional Services resource management item was deferred to a future meeting to allow time for the remaining agenda.

2 Communications, Marketing and Engagement review and PACE update

Received:

- An update from KM on the Communications, Marketing and Engagement review, followed by an update on PACE activity.

Noted:

- The review initiation brief had been approved and discovery work had begun. Confirmation of the detailed timetable was expected shortly, after which it would be communicated to the wider communications, marketing and student recruitment community.
- The review is taking a holistic view of the function, with early activity focused on leadership capability, validation of current service maps and future capability requirements. Internal communications and engagement is progressing as an initial strand, with web and digital marketing likely to follow.
- Alumni communications and engagement remains within DDAR and is outside the direct scope of the review, although stronger use of alumni stories, networks and lifelong-learning opportunities was recognised as important.

- Members expressed concern about the pace of progress, prolonged uncertainty for colleagues, continuity of business-as-usual activity and the quality and currency of the University web estate. The need for clear outcomes, measures of success and visible improvements was emphasised.
- Success measures should include strategic clarity, stronger capability, a high-performance and innovative culture, and improved underpinning technology. Revenue, reputation, recruitment, research and relationships were identified as central outcomes.
- PACE is bringing together recruitment, admissions, conversion, enrolment, marketing, market intelligence, scholarships and bursaries, and related activity. A cross-functional task-and-finish approach used in SEED was reported to have been valuable and potentially replicable in other Schools.
- Further work includes market research on cross-Faculty programme opportunities, changes to accommodation allocation processes, development of an international agents' portal, and targeted employability activity for China and India.
- Members highlighted the importance of freeing staff from manual processing so that more resource could be directed to human-centred conversion activity and improving prospective-student engagement.

Agreed:

- Immediate inaccuracies on programme webpages should be corrected where local action is possible, including outdated employability information.
- The SEED task-and-finish model should be considered for use in SALC and other Schools where it would add value.
- Further updates should be provided on the Communications, Marketing and Engagement review timetable and PACE activity.

3 Teaching Assistant framework

Received:

- An update from AB on development of Faculty guidance to align with the institutional Teaching Assistant policy.

Noted:

- A Faculty document is being drafted, intended to operate as a framework or supplementary guidance rather than a separate policy.
- The institutional policy is focused only on UoM postgraduate research students undertaking teaching.

- Members discussed group sizes, governance and management of GTA allocations, the balance between academic and Professional Services oversight, and inconsistent local practice. Members noted the need for consistent practice across Schools and clarity that teaching is optional and not guaranteed.
- The primary purpose of PGR study is research and completion of the doctorate. Teaching should provide proportionate development and experience without creating an expectation of recurring income or undermining completion.
- The Faculty currently operates an approved position allowing up to 180 hours, compared with the institutional 120-hour position, pending wider review.
- A reducing PGR population will create challenges for programmes that rely heavily on GTA delivery, requiring longer-term workforce and curriculum planning.

Agreed:

- The draft framework should be circulated to FE members for comment.
- The guidance should make explicit that teaching is not guaranteed, clarify expectations for each cohort and address consistency of practice, including governance, workload and group-size considerations.

4 Course Unit Framework and Curriculum Transformation

Received:

- An update from AB on the Course Unit Framework and emerging institutional curriculum transformation arrangements.

Noted:

- The framework is being interpreted as a set of rules by some colleagues, rather than a set of principles and intended outcomes. The CUF should be driving programme resilience and distinctiveness, strong pedagogical design, and manageability and reduced logistical complexity.
- Programmes should be able to articulate why the programme, why Manchester and what it will do for students, supported by coherent structures, core foundations and appropriate progression to advanced and specialist study.
- Members supported pedagogically led design, while emphasising the need for measurable parameters and red lines to reduce excessive optionality, avoid unsustainable low-enrolment units and prevent complexity returning over time.
- The preferred approach was described as freedom within a framework, allowing disciplinary agency in how shared outcomes are achieved while maintaining clear expectations for simplification, resilience and sustainability.

- Institutional leadership of curriculum transformation is being reconsidered following a change in personnel, with the intention that Faculty activity, including the Course Unit Framework, should form part of a University-wide programme.
- Engagement with staff and trade unions will be important, particularly to address concern that curriculum reform is linked to job reduction rather than educational improvement.

Agreed:

- AB should share a concise paper setting out the principles, intended outcomes, scope for disciplinary agency and the continuing parameters of the framework.
- School-level engagement should use data on module numbers and enrolments to support informed discussion with departments, while allowing justified pedagogical exceptions.
- Further work should align the Faculty framework with the developing institutional curriculum transformation programme.

5 Faculty Infrastructure Committee

Received:

- A proposal to establish a Humanities Faculty Infrastructure Committee covering estates, equipment and IT infrastructure.

Noted:

- The other Faculties have comparable committees. A Humanities committee would support multi-year planning, prioritisation of bids and oversight of investment across estates and IT.
- The committee should be empowered to make appropriate decisions within delegated limits, with significant matters and recommendations reported to FE.
- Membership should balance academic and Professional Services expertise and reflect School representation. Suggested inputs included Directors of School Operations, technical services, EDI and accessibility expertise, finance, estates and IT.
- Members cautioned against excessively large membership and recommended developing an indicative first agenda to test whether the proposed composition is fit for purpose.
- A five-year planning horizon was supported, including capital equipment, cross-School software and infrastructure requirements.

Agreed:

- A Humanities Faculty Infrastructure Committee will be established.
- The committee will initially meet every two months, with the frequency reviewed once its work programme is established.
- FD and ER will refine the terms of reference, delegated authority, membership and initial agenda, circulate the revised proposal for final comment and proceed with implementation.

6 Faculty risk register

Received:

- The revised Faculty risk register and proposed governance arrangements.

Noted:

- A twice-yearly review cycle was proposed, including a post-budget review and a review during semester one, to align risk assessment with budgets, targets and the planning cycle.
- Sub-risk 9.1 relating to Manchester Online should be removed as currently worded, while the overarching risk should be revised to capture Faculty-level financial sustainability, capacity, reputation, delivery and potential programme commercialisation risks.
- Rankings and reputation should be reflected more explicitly. Members favoured a risk that spans research and teaching dimensions rather than treating rankings solely as a research matter.
- The relationship between Faculty and institutional risks should be reviewed when the updated University risk register is available.
- Risk 7 should be co-owned by the Deputy Dean and EDoFO, and recognise the Faculty response and resilience dimension of cyber risk. The score should be reconsidered in light of recent incidents.

Agreed:

- The proposed twice-yearly governance route was approved.
- Sub-risk 9.1 will be removed and the overarching Manchester Online risk narrative strengthened.
- A rankings and reputation risk will be developed, drawing together relevant research and teaching considerations.
- Risk 7 ownership and scoring will be reviewed offline.
- The amended register will be circulated or presented for information without requiring further substantive agenda time.

7 FE away day priorities and financial resilience

Discussion:

The individual reflections can be grouped into the following six broad areas. These themes overlap and are presented as a synthesis, rather than a ranked list or agreed decisions.

1 Financial sustainability and income diversification
2 Academic portfolio, student experience and distinctiveness
3 Research income, collaboration and reputation
4 Workforce planning, skills and deployment
5 Capacity for change, leadership and service improvement
6 Partnerships

8 Any other business and next steps

Noted:

- Preparations for the Board of Governors engagement were progressing. Schools had been asked to identify leading researchers, grants and examples that demonstrate Faculty strengths.
- Items requiring detailed development would be progressed through the relevant Faculty committees and brought back to FE where strategic decisions were required.

Next meeting: 17 November 2026