TRUSTEE BOARD 2026-02 MINUTES

Meeting Date and Time	Tuesday, 9th June 2026 09:00 – 11:30 (GMT)
Meeting Location	Online (Zoom)

MEMBERS PRESENT – MEETING QUORUM IS FOUR VOTING MEMBERS
☒ Bethany Kelly (BK) – Co Vice-Chair Conference, Trustee
☒ Fiona Creaby (FC) – Vice-Chair Finance & Risk, Trustee
☒ Janet Hetherington (JHe) – Vice-Chair EDI, Trustee
☒ Julie Harvie (JHa) – Trustee
☒ Karen Healey (KH) – Trustee
☒ Lizana Oberholzer (LO) – Vice-Chair ABG, Trustee
☒ Paul Armstrong (PA) – MiE Editor-in-Chief, Trustee
☒ Sal Jarvis (SJ) – Co-opted Trustee
☒ Steve Courtney (SC) – Trustee & Acting Chair (in the absence of DO)
☒ Victoria Showunmi (VS) – Trustee

OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE
☒ Kelly Ruston (KRu) – Executive Officer & Minute Taker

APOLOGIES SENT IN ADVANCE OF THE MEETING
☒ Deb Outhwaite (DO) – Chair
☒ Alex Gardner-McTaggart (AGM) – Trustee
☒ Bernardita Moreno (BM) – Trustee
☒ Megan Crawford (MC) – Vice-President
☒ Meng Tian (MT) – Trustee
☒ Tony Bush (TB) – BELMAS President, EMAL Editor-in-Chief, Trustee

Chair's Welcome and Declaration of Interests

SC welcomed members and confirmed he was chairing in the absence of the Chair, as approved in the previous meeting.

There were no declarations of interest.

LO raised a matter relating to Associate Editor appointments, which was agreed to be taken under Any Other Business.

Apologies or Absence

Apologies were noted from DO, AGM, BM, MC, MT and TB, with some joining late and leaving early.

Minutes of the Last Meeting

SC invited approval of the previous minutes, which were agreed as an accurate record.

APPROVED: Minutes from the previous meeting were approved.

Matters arising from the minutes (actions list)

The Board reviewed the action log, noting that the majority of actions had been completed, including circulation of draft contracts, conference preparations, development of terms of reference, and items now covered within the current agenda (membership fees, risk register, and strategic priorities).

Outstanding actions include consideration of learning provider options, now to be addressed within wider strategic discussions, and confirmation of trustee refresher training completion, which remains in progress. Engagement with the ABG and related work on volunteer reviewer recognition are pending forthcoming meetings and logged within those committees as action points.

It was further noted that several legacy actions are now outdated; it was agreed these would be reviewed and updated outside the meeting.

ACTION: Review and refresh the action log.

Matters arising not on the minutes

There were no items arising not on the minutes.

Items to ratify

SC introduced items for ratification, noting that these would be taken throughout the meeting rather than as a single agenda item. Members were reminded that all relevant documents had been circulated in advance via Dropbox and, in line with established practice, were expected to be reviewed ahead of the meeting to enable timely decision-making without extensive in-meeting discussion.

Executive Officer report

KR apologised for the late upload of the report to Dropbox and provided a summary of key updates. It was noted that activity levels had been high in recent months. Preparations for the 2026 conference are nearing completion, with printed materials in final production for delivery ahead of the event.

Membership currently stands at 490, representing a 15.29% increase since the March Board meeting and 44.54% overall growth since 2022. The membership base remains broadly balanced between UK and international members, with notable growth in student membership, attributed in part to conference-related incentives. Referral activity has also increased, with 58 new members joining through the referral scheme year-to-date. Retention over the past 12 months remains strong at 96.56%.

A full review of organisational policies is underway, with a comprehensive update to be circulated following the conference. Partnership agreements were also noted, including renewal of the memorandum of understanding with the Chartered College of Teaching for a further three years, while other agreements remain under review or on hold.

Conference 2026:
Conference statistics were presented, including 240 registered delegates and a varied programme comprising 140 theatre presentations, 11 workshops, 8 posters, 5 IGNITE! sessions and 11 symposiums. Some withdrawals were noted in line with deadlines and policy. Current projections indicate a potential surplus of approximately £17,000.

Conference 2027:
Initial planning for the 2027 conference is underway, with venue options to be decided later in the Board meeting.

Finally, progress on the draft strategic plan was reported, with next steps including development of key performance indicators, operational planning, and preparation for publication.

SC considered the potential introduction of institutional membership and agreed to reflect on possible models ahead of the next meeting. It was noted that, while a discounted group membership offer exists, uptake has been limited, and refinements may be needed to increase its appeal and effectiveness.

ACTION: Explore and develop proposals to enhance institutional/group membership offerings, including options for institutional access models, and present recommendations to the Board at the next meeting.

Finance & Risk Committee (F&RC)

Management Accounts P4 (April) 2026
FC reported that, due to the early timing of this meeting in June, May management accounts were not yet available, and the Board reviewed April figures. Overall performance was positive, with income exceeding expectations, driven primarily by stronger-than-anticipated conference revenue and higher membership levels.

An additional £3,000 in royalty income, following a prior miscalculation identified by Sage, has now been received and accounted for in the current financial year in line with audit guidance.

Expenditure is broadly in line with expectations, with some timing variances due to the later scheduling of the conference; these are expected to normalise as the year progresses. A potential underspend on website costs was noted, presenting an opportunity for further development work within the year.

RIG expenditure is currently below expected levels, and convenors will be encouraged to progress planned activity, noting that budgets do not carry forward. It was further noted that guidance and planning templates will be developed to support more effective forecasting and profiling of RIG expenditure in future. Overall, the financial position remains stable and on track.

Organisational Risk Register

FC invited KH to provide an update from the Finance and Risk Committee on progress with the risk register review. It was reported that an initial detailed review had identified several issues, including outdated or missing risks, unclear articulation, and instances where control measures were either inappropriate or insufficient to mitigate the risks identified.

The F&RC raised concerns regarding the reliability of the register as presented to the Board, noting that it is not currently operating effectively as a governance tool. A deeper review of selected risks further highlighted a lack of clear ownership and oversight, particularly beyond financial risks, which fall within the Committee's remit.

It was therefore concluded that the current structure does not adequately support organisational governance. The Committee proposed that responsibility for the risk register be transferred to a governance-focused committee. In addition, it was recommended that the register be refocused on strategic, financial, and governance risks, with operational risks managed separately for the office level.

VS discussed risks relating to equity, reputation, and the external environment, with FC and KH noting that such strategic governance risks are not currently reflected in the existing risk register. It was agreed that these considerations should be incorporated into a revised, governance-focused register, with equity remaining a central and explicit priority.

The Board supported the proposal to restructure risk management so that a strategic risk register is overseen at Board level under the new People, Equality, Risk and Governance Committee, alongside a separate operational register managed by the office.

APPROVED: The Board approved the April management accounts.
APPROVED: The Board approved the proposed approach to the risk register.

Updates from Trustee Sub-Committees

Appointments & Remuneration Committee (A&RC)

No updates were required from the committee at this stage of the year.

Awards, Bursaries & Grants Committee Report (ABG)

LO reported a productive year, having completed the full cycle of award and thesis application reviews. Updated protocols and procedures for conference judging have been developed, including revised assessment criteria and clearer allocation processes to strengthen consistency and transparency.

The ABG committee will next review outcomes from the conference cycle before commencing the 2026–27 cycle in September. Appreciation was expressed to committee members, including new Trustee JH for their contributions, particularly recognising new and ongoing support in managing the significant volume of work and ensuring effective coordination and communication of award outcomes.

Conference Committee Report (CC)

BK reported strong progress, with preparations well advanced and 2026 attendance levels exceeding previous years. The programme and event planning were noted as high quality, supported by significant contributions from staff and committee members. Current projections indicate a healthy surplus.

Proposals were presented for future conference venues, recommending Newcastle for 2027 and York for 2028, supported by favourable costs, accessibility, and positive engagement with venues. The Board acknowledged that maintaining a Four Nations presence remains important. However, the agreed approach is to adopt a more flexible model rather than a strict rotation, balancing geographic representation with financial sustainability, accessibility, and venue value.

The Board noted that Four Nations engagement can be achieved not only through conference location, but also through programme content, speakers, partnerships, and wider activity. Future planning will therefore consider both location and broader representation, alongside opportunities to secure cost-effective, multi-year venue arrangements.

APPROVED: The Board approved the proposed venues for 2027 (Newcastle) and 2028 (York).

EDI Committee Report (EDIC)

The EDI Committee reported that no formal update was provided at this stage, as activity since the previous Board meeting has taken place through a working group. Relevant matters, including EDI and risk, are scheduled to be considered later in the agenda.

DSA Advisory Board Report

SC presented an update from the Distinguished Service Award Advisory Board, noting its renaming to the *Distinguished Fellows Advisory Board* to consolidate awards under a single "Distinguished Fellowship" framework. It was confirmed that the current year would be the final awarding of the Distinguished Service Award, after which all future recognitions will be conferred as Fellowships.

The rationale for these changes included the need to expand the number of Fellows to support strategic work, address a backlog of deserving candidates, and increase international representation. The Board was advised that a shift has been made to a rolling nominations process, with future announcements no longer tied to the conference.

For the current year, nominations were internally generated by the Advisory Board. LO raised concerns regarding process visibility and alignment with existing committee practices, particularly around communication with the ABG Committee. It was agreed that this would be reviewed and clarified.

The Board proceeded to approve the proposed recipients of Distinguished Fellowships as set out in the papers, with awards to be formally announced at the AGM.

APPROVED: The Board approved the proposed recipients of Distinguished Fellowship for announcement at the 2026 AGM/DSA event.

Reports from the Editors-in-Chief

Educational Management & Leadership (EMAL)

TB provided the email update below:

Editorial Board Structure

The growth in submissions has led to an expansion of the EMAL Operational Team. Congratulations to Susanne Sahlin and Alex Gardner-McTaggart, who join Pontso Moorosi as Senior Associate Editors. These new appointments were followed by a 'call' for new associate editors, ring-fenced to BELMAS members. We received 34 applications and congratulations to Paul Campbell, Waheed Hammad, Berni Moreno and Deb Outhwaite who have been appointed to join the Editorial Board.

Submissions

Submissions have grown significantly in the past three years:

2024: 777
2025: 1128
2026 (January-mid June): 725 (annual rate 1582)

Impact Factor

EMAL's 2025 Impact Factor is 3.9 (Q1). The 2024 figure was 3.3, so this is a significant improvement.

Management in Education (MiE)

PA reported that activity remains high, with submissions continuing to increase and expected to surpass last year's record levels. This rise is attributed in part to the recent increase in the journal word limit to 8,000 words, alongside targeted promotion, which has generated additional interest and engagement.

The journal is receiving a broader range of contributions, including an increase in longer-form and opinion pieces. While a higher volume of unsuitable submissions has also been observed, this was noted as consistent with increased visibility and growth. The journal is, however, in a strong position overall, with robust submission rates and continued development.

Appreciation was expressed to the editorial team, reviewers, and publishing partners for their ongoing contributions. The Board noted the positive trajectory of the journal and its potential to further strengthen both reputation and income generation.

KPI and Strategy Progress

The Board sought clarification on any updates to the current Strategic Plan KPIs. It was confirmed that there have been no changes to existing KPIs. Progress against current objectives is largely complete, with most actions delivered or nearing completion.

Policy and Governance Reviews

The Board moved to consider policy and governance reviews. It was noted that several finance-related policies, originally scheduled for March, had been deferred due to time constraints and were not operationally critical.

Disposal of Assets and Depreciation Policy

The depreciation and disposal of assets policy was presented for review. It was confirmed that the policy aligns with standard accounting practice and has been subject to audit review, with no changes proposed. The Board was therefore asked to approve continuation of the policy for the next three-year cycle.

APPROVED: The Board approved the Disposal of Assets and Depreciation Policy.

Reserves Policy

FC presented the revised Reserves Policy, noting that the updated format reflects increased regulatory expectations for transparency under current accounting guidance. The policy now provides greater clarity on the purpose and application of reserves, including coverage for operational continuity, financial contingencies, statutory obligations, and advance financial commitments such as conference contracts.

It was confirmed that the Board's position remains unchanged, maintaining reserves equivalent to 12 months of operational expenditure. The revisions therefore relate to improved communication and compliance rather than any change in approach.

It was further noted that reserves will continue to be reviewed regularly, both annually and through ongoing financial monitoring, to ensure they remain appropriate in light of potential risks and changing circumstances.

APPROVED: The Board approved the updated Reserves Policy.

Financial Support for International Travel Policy

FC introduced revisions to the financial support policy for international travel, noting that the changes were primarily intended to clarify wording and remove ambiguities regarding eligibility, accountability, and scope, particularly in relation to Board members and official representation.

During discussion, a query was raised regarding whether sustainability considerations, such as environmental impact and carbon footprint, should be reflected in the policy. It was acknowledged that this is an important area for future development, and while not currently embedded in the policy, it may be addressed through broader governance work, including potential development of an ethical trading or sustainability statement.

Further feedback identified an issue with wording in the circulated version, where a drafting error could imply that Board members might apply for funding without clear organisational purpose. It was confirmed that this wording had been intended for deletion and would be corrected to ensure clarity and avoid misinterpretation.

Subject to this amendment, the Board approved the updated policy.

APPROVED: The Board approved the Financial Support for International Travel Policy, with amendments to be made.

Events Refund Policy

FC presented updates to the Events Refund Policy, noting that proposed amendments primarily clarify existing practice and improve transparency for members. It was highlighted that the

policy timing is currently misaligned with conference planning cycles, and it was recommended that future reviews take place annually in the autumn, ahead of conference launch and publication of terms and conditions.

The Board discussed the organisation's current position of absorbing 100% of financial risk in the event of conference cancellation. It was noted that, in an increasingly uncertain global context, this approach may expose the organisation to significant financial impact, particularly given contractual obligations to venues and the potential effect on reserves. While recognising the importance of fairness to members, particularly international delegates, it was agreed that the Board should revisit its risk appetite in this area.

The Board approved the proposed wording amendments to the policy and agreed that a further, more detailed review of refund policy and risk exposure will be undertaken in the autumn, ahead of future conference planning cycles.

APPROVED: The Board approved the Events Refund Policy.

Working Groups

Strategy Planning

SC introduced the draft Strategic Plan, thanking those involved for the significant work undertaken. The document was presented as a deliberately high-level, strategic framework, distinguishing clearly between strategic intent and operational delivery, with a supporting operational plan to follow separately.

The Board was guided through the structure, including the reaffirmed mission, vision and values and strategic purpose, and the introduction of four core pillars: sustainability, research development, practice, and partnerships and networks. It was noted that these pillars are intended to guide activity without artificially separating interconnected areas of work. EDI has been embedded throughout the framework rather than treated as a standalone theme, reflecting its integral importance to the organisation's values.

In discussion, members were broadly supportive of the direction and clarity of the document. However, several concerns were raised regarding the articulation of EDI, particularly within the success criteria. While members supported the principle of embedding EDI throughout, it was felt that its visibility within the success measures was insufficiently explicit, creating a risk that commitments may not be clearly evidenced or tracked. It was suggested that stronger alignment with organisational values and more clearly defined success indicators would address this.

The Board acknowledged these points and agreed that the document requires refinement to strengthen and make more explicit the EDI dimension, while retaining the overall strategic approach.

A vote was taken, and the Board endorsed the overall direction of the Strategic Plan, with the understanding that amendments would be made in line with the discussion before finalisation.

APPROVED: The Board endorsed the draft Strategic Plan, subject to amendments to strengthen and make more explicit the integration of EDI within the success criteria.

ACTION: Strategic Plan Working Group to revise the document accordingly and recirculate an updated version to the Board for final approval.

New Committee for People, Equality, Risk & Governance and By-Law Changes 2026

SC asked the Board to consider the proposed By-Law amendments to support the establishment of the new *People, Equality, Risk and Governance (PERG) Committee* and to strengthen governance arrangements, particularly in relation to risk oversight, leadership continuity, and trustee terms.

Key changes included extending the maximum term of the Chair from five to six years to align with trustee cycles and support continuity; clarifying that trustees completing a first term must stand for re-election; and enhanced provisions to allow limited extensions to trustee or portfolio roles only in exceptional circumstances where there is a clear and evidenced organisational risk.

The Board also approved the formal establishment of the PERG Committee, with an expanded remit covering EDI, governance, culture, and organisational risk. The revised Vice Chair role will oversee this committee, ensuring stronger strategic oversight and embedding EDI within governance structures.

Further amendments removed overly restrictive eligibility criteria for portfolio and Chair roles, enabling a broader pool of experienced candidates, while maintaining trustee tenure as the primary control. It was noted that processes relating to nominations and committee engagement may require further review to ensure clarity and consistency.

LO raised concern regarding the proposed length of the Chair's term; however, the Board proceeded to a vote on the amendments as presented.

APPROVED: The Board approved the By-Law changes.

Vice Chair Structure

SC introduced a further governance risk identified through the review, namely that the current structure does not provide an effective or clearly defined Vice Chair function. While existing "Vice Chair" titles are held by committee leads, it was noted that these roles operate primarily as committee chairs and do not provide sufficient organisational exposure or continuity to enable individuals to step into the Chair role if required.

To address this, SC proposed establishing a distinct Vice Chair position, alongside redesignating current Vice Chairs as Committee Chairs to more accurately reflect their responsibilities. The proposed Vice Chair role would support capacity at Chair level, provide succession resilience, and mitigate organisational risk. It was clarified that this role would not carry an automatic right of succession to Chair; any transition would remain subject to the normal election process.

Members expressed broad support for the principle, recognising both the governance and capacity benefits. However, concerns were raised regarding agreeing the change in principle without fuller detail. It was suggested that a formal proposal, including a clear role description and terms of reference, should be developed before approval.

It was agreed that a detailed proposal for the Vice Chair role, including draft By-Law amendments, would be brought back to the Board for further consideration prior to any formal decision.

ACTION: Draft By-Law amendments with a detailed proposal for the Vice Chair role presented to October Board for further consideration.

Audited Accounts 2025

FC noted the urgency of approving the audited accounts in advance of the forthcoming AGM and agreed to proceed without deferral.

FC confirmed that the audit for 2025 had been completed successfully, with a clean audit outcome and no significant issues identified. Minor year-end adjustments were made in line with standard accounting practice, including VAT alignment, depreciation, and prepayments.

The auditors reported positively, and the Board noted its continued strong working relationship with Hawsons.

APPROVED: The Board approved the 2025 audited accounts for submission to the AGM.
APPROVED: The Board also approved recommending the reappointment of Hawsons as auditors for 2026, noting this is expected to be the final year before undertaking a market review for audit services.

ACTION: FC to submit the approved audited accounts for presentation at the 2026 AGM.
ACTION: Board to include the reappointment of Hawsons as auditors for 2026 within the AGM agenda for formal member approval.

Membership Fee Increase 2027

FC proposed revisions to membership rates for 2027 onwards. It was noted that membership fees have remained unchanged since 2015 and are now significantly below comparable organisations. FC recognised the need to address this considering rising costs, projected reductions in income, and the importance of maintaining organisational sustainability.

A phased approach to fee increases over a three-year period was proposed to align rates more closely with sector benchmarks while minimising impact on members. It was also noted that category changes, including the introduction of an Early Career Researcher (ECR) rate and adjustments to existing categories, aim to improve equity and accessibility.

APPROVED: The Board approved the proposed membership fee increases for 2027, including the revised category structure, with indicative phased increases for subsequent years.

ACTION: Office to implement the approved 2027 membership rates and updated categories.
ACTION: F&RC to review and confirm rates for 2028 and 2029 as part of the annual budgeting process, with adjustments made if required.

Any other Business (AOB)

LO raised concerns under Any Other Business regarding the process for appointing Associate Editors and the potential perception of conflicts of interest.

Members had queried the transparency of the process, including how decisions are made, how conflicts are managed, and how appointments, particularly involving individuals in positions of influence, may be perceived externally. Concerns were also raised about related public communications and reputational implications.

It was clarified that appointments are the responsibility of the Editors-in-Chief, in line with standard academic practice. However, it was acknowledged that governance and communication around these processes could be strengthened.

The Board noted the importance of ensuring clarity around governance expectations, particularly regarding conflicts of interest and public perception.

Date of the next meeting
Date: Tuesday, 20th October 2026
Time: 09:00 – 11:30
Location: Zoom (Online)

-ENDS-

TRUSTEE BOARD ACTIONS TABLE

#	Date of Action	Action Required	Date TBC	Responsibility
1	14/01/25	DO and KR to create a form for Vice President nominations	On hold	DO / KR
2	16/12/25	Work with the Blog editorial team to review processes.	Ongoing	KR / Blog
3	24/03/26	Circulate draft contract of book series contract to journals working group for comments.	Immediate	KR
4	24/03/26	Check completion status of trustee refresher training and follow up where required.	Immediate	KR
5	24/03/26	Further refinement of the risk register to be undertaken and incorporated in PERG committee.	October	PERG
6	24/03/26	Attend ABG meeting to explore joint awards with partner or sister organisations.	2026	VS
7	24/03/26	Defer discussion of discounted benefits for volunteers.	June 2026	Board
8	09/06/26	Review and refresh the action log.	Immediate	KR / SC
9	09/06/26	Explore and develop proposals to enhance institutional/group membership offerings, including options for institutional access models, and present recommendations to the Board at the next meeting.	October Board	KR
10	09/06/26	Strategic Plan Working Group to revise the document accordingly and recirculate an updated version to the Board for final approval.	July Strategy Meeting	Working Group
11	09/06/26	Draft By-Law amendments with a detailed proposal for the Vice Chair role presented to October Board for further consideration.	October Board	PERG
12	09/06/26	Submit the approved audited accounts for presentation at the 2026 AGM.	July	FC
13	09/06/26	Include the reappointment of Hawsons as auditors for 2026 within the AGM agenda for formal member approval.	July	AGM
14	09/06/26	Implement the approved 2027 membership rates and updated categories.	Autumn	Office
15	09/06/26	Review and confirm rates for 2028 and 2029 as part of the annual budgeting process, with adjustments made if required.	2027	F&RC