

Minutes of proceedings of the Governing Body Meeting

Date: Thursday, 28th October 2021
Time: 10.00am – 1.00pm
Location: Microsoft Teams and Boardroom, Galway Campus

Present: Mr Cormac MacDonncha (Chair)
Dr Orla Flynn (President)
Mr Joe Cunningham
Mr Gareth Roe
Mr Michael Geoghegan
Ms Maureen Walsh
Ms Siobhán Kennedy
Ms Mary McGinley
Mr David Leahy
Dr Eleanor Rainsford
Cllr Paul Murphy
Cllr Terry O’Flaherty
Ms Maria Madden
Ms Ricarda Bolle
Cllr Michael Maher
Cllr Colm Keaveney

In Attendance: Mr Jim Fennell, Secretary / VP for Finance & Corporate Services
Dr Michel Hannon, VP for Academic Affairs and Registrar
Dr Rick Officer, VP for Research & Innovation
Ms Fiona Higgins, Meeting Secretary

Apologies: Mr Tom Grady
Mr Colin Kearney
Ms Proinsias Ní Ghrainne

1.0 Declaration of Conflict of Interest with Agenda Items	ALL
There were no conflicts of interest declared by those present or in attendance.	
2.0 Minutes of Previous Meeting	All
The minutes of Governing Body Meeting held on 30 th September were approved on the proposal of Cllr Michael Maher and seconded by Cllr Terry O’Flaherty.	
3.0 Matters Arising from Minutes	All
<p>There were no matters arising.</p> <p>Mr Michael Geoghegan referred to the previous minutes dated 30th September, (item 7.0 Connacht Rugby MOU) and queried why the various Sports Alliance agreements e.g. Liam Mellows GAA club, previously had to go through such an extensive approval process.</p> <p>The President advised that capital investment is a reserved function of the Governing Body and requires Governing Body approval. Collaborative agreements and MoU’s are not reserved functions, however in the case of the Connacht Rugby MoU, while it is an academic collaboration involving research and use of data, it involves sponsorship and the Audit & Risk Committee (ARC) recommended that it be considered by the Governing Body which is consistent with the Sponsorship policy to be considered for approval later on the agenda.</p> <p>Mr Michael Geoghegan also referred to the Unit Cost report and suggested that the Institute bring some focus on growing student numbers in Electronics as there are many opportunities for electronic graduates. Following a discussion, the meeting agreed that a number of Programme offerings needed renewed focus, and this would also involve engagement with external stakeholders including Schools and industry partners.</p>	
4.0 President	O Flynn
<p>4.1 President’s Report</p> <p>The President’s Report to Governing Body was circulated for information. Dr Flynn provided a presentation to the Board on a range of items in the report.</p> <p>Dr Rick Officer provided an update on some of the achievements in Research & Innovation activities including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Funding secured under E.I. capital funding call of €476,000 - Funding secured under E.I. Innovation Partnership Programme €372K - Marine Institute Fellowships €110K - R&I Funding sought under various funding calls by Horizon 2021, SFI, E.I. and other research funding agencies. - iHUB Client Company Awards <p><u>COVID-19 Update</u></p> <p>Cllr Terry O’Flaherty queried if there was any guidance from Government regarding COVID-19 Update.</p> <p>The President advised that all HEIs are retaining mask wearing and focusing on enhanced ventilation, and GMIT remains very vigilant. Overall, in society, there is no major change to what is being required of us.</p> <p>Dr Flynn advised that GMIT intended to increase onsite activities with consequent possible timetable changes from 1st November 2021. GMIT campus is busy and student</p>	

accommodation remains as a significant issue. Dr Flynn advised she is meeting with the Students' Union President today to discuss challenges currently facing students.

Dr Flynn thanked the Buildings Office for the work completed on meeting ventilation requirements under COVID-19.

Dr Flynn advised that GMIT intends to return to full onsite delivery in Semester 2 and advised that GMIT needs to remain vigilant if this is to be achieved.

4.2 Technological University (TU) Update

Dr Flynn provided an update on the TU status and advised that the announcement of designation as a Technological University is a significant day for GMIT. The following documentation will be uploaded to the Governing Body SharePoint site:

- Report of the International Advisory panel to the HEA
- Letter from HEA to the Minister DFHERIS dated 13th September 2021
- Letter from the Minister DFHERIS to the CUA IoT Chairpersons dated 21st October 2021

Designation day is expected to be in Q1 2022.

The International Panel have made three recommendations:

Organisational design:

CUA should consider further articulation of proposed organisational structure and functions / responsibilities of colleges' structure within the new TU. This should be a major point of attention in the immediate post-designation period and be reviewed subsequently in a few years.

Research:

The TU needs to develop a clear and sustainable research capacity building strategy and re-examine current research structures post-designation.

Regional Engagement: Regional responsiveness should be a corner stone of the new TU. The region's diversity will present particular challenges, and structures to support enterprise engagement within the region must reflect and respect such diversity.

Dr Flynn advised that the TU received a clear green flag on all criteria regarding regional development and thanked colleagues for their contribution to this success.

In a response to a query from the Chair regarding the name of the TU, Dr Flynn advised that this will be announced in the coming weeks. The CUA have advised the Minister of the process undertaken which involved student and staff surveys and retaining external professional expertise.

EDI:

The President advised that it's been busy with Athena SWAN and GMIT received the formal award last week which is displayed in the GMIT Boardroom. EDI activities are now focussing on a range of Equality and Diversity issues, in addition to gender equality.

GMIT graduate, front line health care worker and current Miss Ireland, Pamela Uba, visited GMIT recently and Dr Flynn referred to a conversation between Pamela and the GMIT EDI Manager, Mary Nestor, which was recorded and well worth listening to.

Dr Flynn advised that GMIT are at the end of the first 5 weeks of the student campaign. She thanked Dr Michael Hannon and his team for arranging various student activities. The Students' Union organised Clubs and societies days. The President also noted that there was a pleasant event, welcoming international students, which was attended by the Mayor of Galway City, Cllr Collette Connolly.

<p>4.3 Media Coverage Report</p> <p>The Media Coverage Report was taken as read.</p>	
<p>5.0 Mayo Campus</p>	<p>O Flynn</p>
<p>5.1 Report from Mayo Campus Subcommittee and 5.2 Correspondence with HEA</p> <p>Dr Orla Flynn advised the Governing body that a meeting of the Mayo Campus Subcommittee was held on 12th of October. The meeting considered the interim review conducted by Mazars on behalf of the HEA. The Mayo Campus Subcommittee also considered the letter from the HEA to the Minister which recommended a continuation of the ringfenced funding for one additional year, and the need to consider the possibility of a new funding model for regional provision. Dr Flynn advised there are realities and challenges in operating a multi campus business model which will be particularly relevant to the TU.</p> <p>The President and Chairman left the meeting at this point (11:00) to attend a call with the Minister and Mr Joe Cunningham deputised for the Chairman.</p>	
<p>6.0 Corporate Governance</p>	<p>J Fennell</p>
<p>6.1 Report from Chair of Audit & Risk Committee (Mary McGinley)</p> <p>Ms McGinley informed the Board that the ARC had a positive meeting with the Internal Auditors, Deloitte. The Internal Auditors have confirmed a good working relationship with the C&AG. Internal audit is progressing well, excellent co-operation with GMIT Management team was noted, and Internal Audits are being completed on time. Deloitte confirmed that issues are addressed quickly and noted the positive engagement with GMIT. Internal audit is functioning effectively as a management tool and offering advice on how risk management, governance and systems of internal control can be improved.</p> <p>The ARC meeting considered the internal audit report on the internal financial controls review. There was a total of 6 findings: 2 moderate and 4 minor, there were no significant findings. Management have begun addressing the findings.</p> <p>The Internal Audit Plan was also discussed. The Internal Audit plan includes the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of internal financial controls, • Reviewing findings from previous internal audit reports, ensuring items and actions are followed through. • Business Continuity and Disaster Recovery Planning. <p>Review of Strategic implementation and monitoring, which was planned, will not now proceed due to the imminent merger. The meeting noted the vacancy in Risk Management and Corporate Governance and was advised that the position is expected to be filled in the new year.</p> <p>Dr Eleanor Rainsford, referring to the risk register, asked if GMIT receives statistical reports on the Employee Assistance Programme?. Mr Fennell advised there is extensive use of this programme and advised that GMIT receives statistical data, and that HR will be requested to provide documentation on this at the next meeting</p>	

Dr Rainsford noted that one of the risks on the risk register is the risk of not providing adequate infrastructure and facilities and suggested updating the risk mitigation actions with recent decision such as the acquisition of modular buildings. Mr. Fennell advised that recent items including modular buildings and office lease that were recommended by the Finance Subcommittees, and Capital Projects Subcommittee, and approved by the Governing Body, would be reflected in the Risk Register.

Dr Eleanor Rainsford referred to the COVID-19 Risk Register, Risk Number 11. Quality assurance and queried if GMIT has any overview of exam results over the last few years and in particular the impact of COVID-19 on exam results.

Mr Fennell advised that the Audit and Risk Committee addressed this matter at their meeting and had asked for an update from the Registrar at their next meeting and this update will also be provided to the Governing Body.

Mr Gareth Roe discussed data relating to students getting first class honours and queried if the ARC had a view on this.

The Chair requested that a report on exam results including progression and awards be provided by the Registrar to the ARC and Governing Body.

Mr Gareth Roe also queried the views of the ARC on the merger and retaining the positive student-centred culture in GMIT.

Ms Mary McGinley advised this is an important point and advised that the role of the ARC includes oversight of the risks pertaining to the merger and a strong focus on making sure the TU progresses in a positive way. Staff and Student experience and progression is paramount.

The meeting noted the enormous contribution GMIT has made to the region over the last 50 years and that we do not wish to lose the Institute's student-centred culture when we become a TU. Governing Body members are very proud to be associated with the Institute.

Mr Michael Geoghegan discussed the modular buildings and advised they are not the way to go. It's not the solution to the infrastructure problems. Mr Fennell advised that GMIT cannot have new buildings without capital funding and advised that it normally takes 4-5 years to deliver capital projects, so the only options open to GMIT to support current growth in student numbers, are modular buildings and leasing of buildings off campus.

The Chair stated it is a risk going down a path of procuring modular buildings and advised he understands the constraints and lack of capital funding and advised that it should be flagged as a risk going forward. At previous meetings, it was mentioned to look at office space which will hopefully free up space in the short term, but advised it is not the long-term solution.

Mr Michael Geoghegan noted that GMIT spend a lot of time on brand and image and asked if modular buildings would have a negative impact, while also noting that GMIT admitted 1,600 first years last year, and 2,000 this year. Mr. Fennell added that GMIT are trying to support growth as best we can.

Cllr. Colm Keaveney stated that this is a temporary solution, as modular buildings can be removed and are not a permanent structure and further noted the dilemma between this and pursuing student numbers and growth.

Mr Geoghegan added that modular buildings become permanent and that the Executive need to explore other alternatives, possibly exploring other buildings to lease around Galway City to support the expansion in student enrolments.

The Chair noted the provision of adequate facilities as an important issue of concern.

Mr Fennell stated that GMIT wishes to avoid moving students and people directly supporting the students off campus and moving non-student facing operations off campus.

Ms Siobhan Kennedy advised there is a balance to be achieved between supporting continuous growth and as far as is reasonably possible and keeping students on campus while ensuring that the location of modular buildings is consistent with the capital projects plan. Ms Kennedy also raised concerns about student housing.

Cllr Terry O'Flaherty mentioned it was very good news on student numbers and it is a positive reflection on GMIT and noted that modular buildings are expensive to run, including heating and maintenance, and asked if GMIT intends to purchase or rent.

Mr Fennell informed the meeting that the first set of modular buildings are being purchased, consideration will be given to leasing or purchasing additional modular buildings. Mr Fennell also mentioned that the presentation from the Registrar, reflects significant growth in Science and Engineering Schools. He advised it would be highly inefficient to move either of these Schools off campus and mentioned that GMIT is looking to move Corporate Services staff to alternative offices.

The Chair advised that the contributions were excellent in setting out clearly positive things, and the enormous number of challenges.

The Vice President for Academic Affairs and Registrar, Dr Michael Hannon, noted the strong growth in student numbers and demand for places at GMIT and expressed his concern that GMIT now finds itself in a position where it is not able to make offers to all students who wish to study in GMIT; for some of whom GMIT is their college of first choice. Dr Hannon further stated that the discussion perfectly encapsulates the current situation in GMIT.

6.2 Risk Management

6.2.1 Report on Risk Register

Mr Fennell presented the Risk Register Report reflecting the views of the ARC on a risk of cyber-attack and implications for GMIT.

6.2.2 Institute Strategic Risk Register

Mr Fennell presented the Institute Strategic Risk Register which was recommended by the ARC for approval. The Institute Risk Register was approved on the proposal of Cllr Colm Keaveney and Seconded by Cllr Paul Murphy.

6.2.3 COVID-19 Risk Register

Mr Fennell presented the COVID-19 Risk Register which was approved on the proposal of Cllr Terry O'Flaherty and seconded by Mr Gareth Roe.

The meeting agreed the recommendation that the COVID-19 Risk Register should become a subsidiary risk register managed by the BCT and Executive.

6.3 Policies & Procedures

6.3.1 Anti-Corruption Policy

Mr. Fennell presented the Anti-Corruption Policy which was recommended by the ARC and was approved on the proposal of Ms Maureen Walsh seconded by Dr Eleanor Rainsford.

6.3.2 Anti-Fraud Policy

Mr Fennell presented the Anti-Fraud Policy which was recommended by the ARC and was approved on the proposal of Cllr Paul Murphy and seconded by Ms Maureen Walsh.

6.3.3 Protected Disclosure Policy

Mr Fennell advised that IT Sligo, Waterford Institute of Technology, Limerick Institute of Technology, and Transparency International Ireland, developed a new protected disclosure policy. The Audit and Risk Committee, considered this policy and recommended that the policy be adopted by the TU. Mr David Leahy felt that it did not seem appropriate to change the disclosure policy at this stage, given the imminent merger and stated that it would make more sense to wait for a new entity to be in place before adopting the new policy.

The existing GMIT Protected Disclosures Policy which was recommended for approval by the ARC was approved on the proposal of Cllr Colm Keaveney and seconded by Cllr Terry O'Flaherty.

6.3.4 Capital Expenditure Policy

Mr Fennell requested the Internal Auditors to prepare a draft policy to be consistent with HEA policies & procedures. The draft was reviewed by the Executive Board with the purpose of the policy restated to ensure GMIT is compliant with policies issued by HEA. Audit and Risk committee considered item 4.5 on the policy which referenced disciplinary action and recommended it be removed from the policy.

Mr David Leahy advised that the ARC did not deem it appropriate to reference a consequence for a person losing their position, it should be to guide employees in a more effective way.

Mr. Joe Cunningham commended the work of the Audit and Risk Committee.

The Capital Expenditure Policy as recommended by the ARC was approved on the Proposal of Cllr Colm Keaveney and seconded by Cllr Paul Murphy.

6.3.5 Sponsorship Policy

The Internal Auditors provided a draft sponsorship policy which was reviewed by the President. Sponsorship should be a reserved function of the Governing Body and the objective of the policy is to connect with target audiences in ways that will reinforce positive perceptions of GMIT and assist in student enrolment.

Dr Rick Officer discussed an upcoming event and the Sponsorship Policy and advised that the Institute should participate in this event.

The Irish American Business Council are celebrating 50 years of Medtronic in Ireland. The global CEO of Medtronic will be attending. and the event is being hosted by An Taoiseach. GMIT are invited to participate and the cost to take a table at the event is €3,000. Dr Officer advised of co-branding opportunities and of a press release this week on new collaboration with Medtronic and the GMIT School of Design. GMIT will be represented at the dinner and this is a key opportunity to highlight industry engagement.

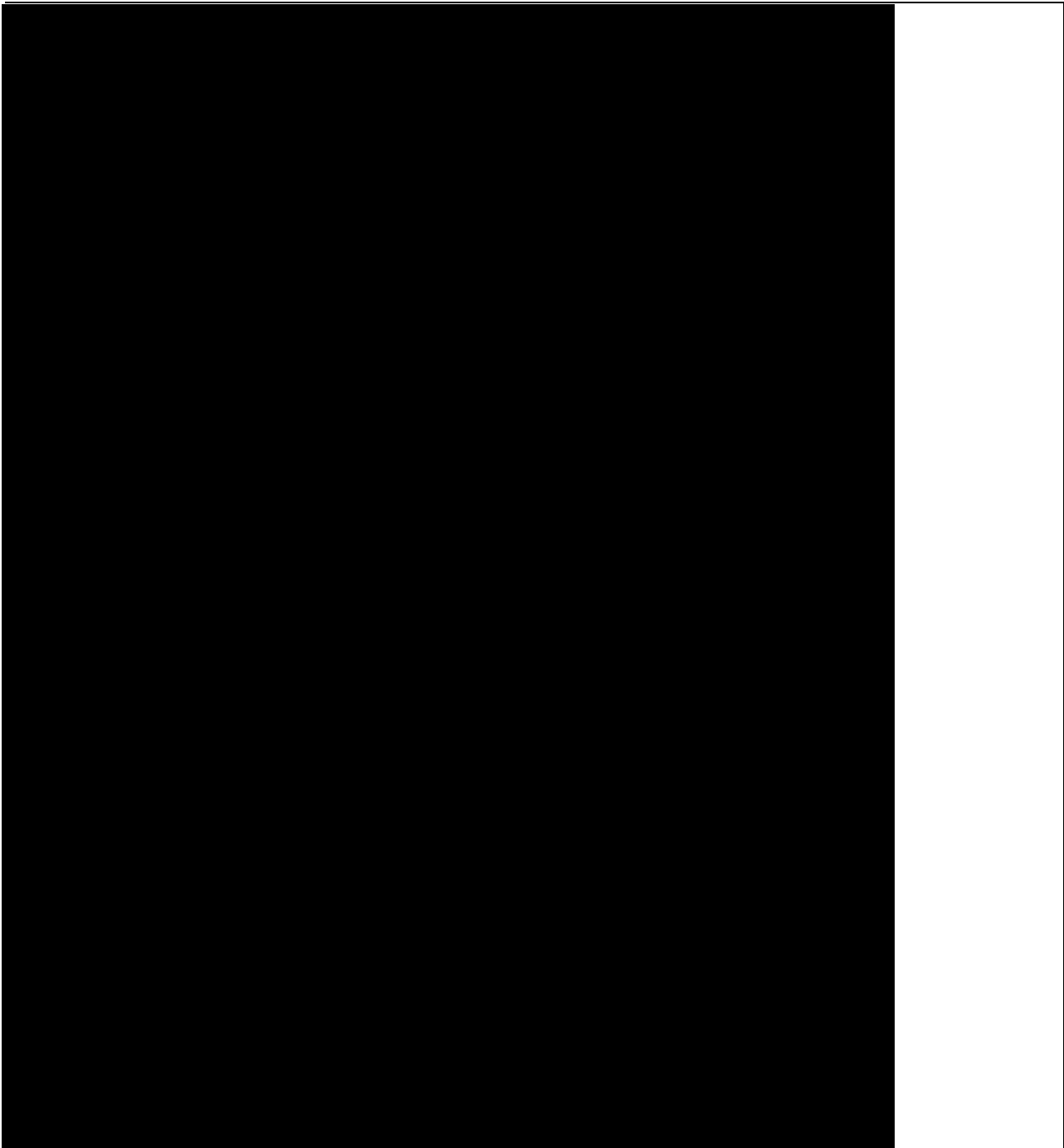
Cllr Keaveney advised that it would be strange if GMIT was not present at this event and mentioned that GMIT would need to look at opportunities for strategic relationships. He felt it would be appropriate to attend.

Ms Maureen Walsh agreed with Cllr Keaveney's sentiment and advised of the global links and significant opportunities available.

The meeting approved the sponsorship of €3,000 to enable GMIT to participate in the event.

<p>Dr Eleanor Rainsford recommended that the policy be amended to reflect ethical considerations in making considerations about sponsorships.</p> <p>Mr Joe Cunningham advised that this needs to be included and thanked Dr Rainsford. Mr Fennell stated that he would make the appropriate amendment under the principles section of the document.</p> <p>Mr Joe Cunningham requested that the amended policy be an agenda item at the next meeting. The policy was approved subject to the proposed amendment for ethical considerations on the proposal of Dr Eleanor Rainsford and seconded by Cllr Paul Murphy.</p>	
<p>7.0 Registrar/Academic Council</p>	<p>M Hannon</p>
<p>7.1 Programme Validation Dr Michael Hannon presented 5 programmes detailed in the following documents:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 7.1.1 MSc Medical Science Report 7.1.2 MSc in Circular Economy Leadership 7.1.3 MSc Built Environment Regulation 7.1.4 Cert in Creative Enterprise & Entrepreneurship 7.1.5 Programme in Marine Entrepreneurship. <p>The programmes were approved on the proposal of Cllr Terry O’Flaherty and seconded by Cllr Michael Maher.</p> <p>7.2 Galway International Hotel School Review Report Dr Michael Hannon advised that Programmatic review is in process and that the documentation circulated is for information.</p> <p>7.3 Documents adopted/endorsed by Academic Council Dr Michael Hannon gave a presentation on this and advised the following documents were adopted/endorsed by Academic Council on 15th October 2021:</p> <p><i>National Academic Integrity Network (underpins everything GMIT does in all aspects). QQI developing.</i> Reference 7.3.1, Academic Integrity Guidelines, Reference 7.3.2, Final Academic Integrity: National Principles and Lexicon of Common Terms</p> <p><i>Draft Joint sectoral Section 55 protocol between DABs and QQI for the inclusion of qualifications on the NFQ</i> Reference 7.3.3, Joint Sectoral Protocol on the Inclusion of Awards of Designated Awarding Bodies within the NFQ Draft.</p> <p>Dr Michael Hannon advised that GMIT are aligning to national developments and mentioned it is a legal requirement – institutes are operating within ACT and have quality procedures in place. He advised that GMIT had to review a legacy issue and academic council endorsed this.</p> <p>7.4 Academic Council Minutes Dr Michael Hannon referenced the following: 7.4.1 Academic Council Minutes 14 May 2021 7.4.2 Academic Council Standing Minutes 16 June 2021 7.4.3 Academic Council Minutes 18 June 2021</p> <p>7.5 CAO - Report from VP Academic Affairs & Registrar Dr Michael Hannon shared a presentation relating to student numbers; provisional returns to the HEA are due end of October 2021 and final returns are due on 1st March 2022. He discussed the net accepts for 2021 and 2020 by school. Science and Computing showed</p>	

<p>an increase in points and increases in student numbers, and he mentioned that Letterkenny & Sligo IoTs did not have these increases.</p> <p>Dr Hannon also advised that there is a possibility that the 1st year intake in the School of Science & Computing will have to be reduced in September 2022. It appears that more students are accepting offers on programmes, compared with that which GMIT can accommodate. He said it is a terrible situation to be turning away qualified applicants because space is a problem and will be for next year also. The consequence of the foregoing may be a reduced 1st year intake in 2022.</p> <p>The Chair expressed concern at this stark news and the impact on the student experience. He discussed the potential capital funding issues along with accommodation being an issue also.</p> <p>Dr Hannon mentioned that COVID-19 has helped with GMIT student retention, especially in 2nd and 3rd years, as students are engaging with a new environment.</p> <p>Dr Eleanor Rainsford queried what is to happen in the next academic year in relation to CAO points. Dr Hannon advised that he hopes the Leaving Certificate exam process will return to normal, and he also mentioned that there are students in the system with inflated points and fears good students may be disadvantaged when trying to enter the college system.</p> <p>Cllr Moegie Maher advised that Furniture Design and Technology courses have very high points and have seen a huge increase in points from last year. Dr Hannon advised that it is a complete anomaly, and he doesn't expect it to be repeated.</p> <p>Mr Fennell advised that the rapid growth in STEM enrolments may not result in an immediate increase in state grant funding due to the impact of the 2% moderator applied in the RGAM. Student fees and contributions in respect of these enrolments will be collected from September 2021 but the impact on the RGAM may not take effect until possibly 2022/2023.</p> <p>Mr David Leahy thanked Dr Hannon for his presentation and expressed the view that there appears to be a problem with the CAO and that it is a crude mechanism. Letterfrack is very specialised and an alternative to the CAO for gaining admission would be desirable.</p> <p>Dr Orla Flynn stated that one of the reasons for unbalanced funding of GMIT is dominance of STEM enrolments and the comparatively lower enrolments on the Business programmes. She expressed concern that if there is growth in overall applications nationally and no similar growth in business programmes, then this would represent a nett decline..</p> <p>Mr Joe Cunningham enquired as to where the Hotel School fits into this. Dr Flynn advised that it is very similar to Electronics and mentioned there are lots of jobs in the industry, the sector is finding it difficult to get employees. Dr Flynn advised that the difficulties in recruiting students are being experienced nationally. Mr Cunningham advised to look at spikes and declines and explore these options. Dr Flynn advised that the Executive met to discuss the challenges of physical capacity on the Galway Campus. Actions from this included looking at timetabling, occupancies, areas allocated for specialist purposes to serve dual audiences, and looking at more radical solutions.</p>	
<p>8.0 Students Union President Report</p> <p>This was not discussed as Mr Colin Kearney sent apologies for being unable to attend the meeting.</p>	<p>C Kearney</p>
<p>9.0 HR Matters</p>	<p>J Fennell</p>



10.0 Any Other Business	All
<p>This concluded the business of the meeting.</p> <p>Signed: _____ Chairperson</p>	<p>Date: _____</p>

Governing Body List of Actions 2021

Action Items Reference Nos are explained as follows:

- The first number of the reference relates to the Date of the Meeting
- The second number of the reference relates to the Agenda Item

Action Item	Action	Action Owner	Target Date	Status
29.08.19 – 10.5 28.11.19 – 7.0	Strategic plans to be developed for: - 1. Marketing - 2. Communications	President	January 2020	Self-Evaluation taking place as part of QA process in 2021
29.08.19 – 10.5 28.11.19 – 7.0 30.01.20 – 9.1	- 1. International Benchmarking exercise on Internationalisation within the Sector Explore appointment of an External Consultant to review International	VP for International	January 2020 March 2020 March 2020	Delayed due to COVID19 Deferred due to COVID19 Decision not to proceed currently Closed – Moved to TU Activity
26.09.19 – 3	Establishment of GIHS Working Group / Review of School/Strategic Plan	Chair & President	Nov/December 2019	Presented to December 2019 meeting Closed
28.01.21 – 10.0	Seek staff nominations for Mayo Campus Subcommittee	Sec/VP Fin Services	March 2021	Seek nominations again Closed, not proceeding TU Imminent
25.02.21 – 9.3	Maintain Conflicts of Interest Register	Sec/VP Fin Services	Ongoing	Ongoing
26.8.21- 4.1	Update on position of COVID Officer	President	September	Provide Update in September Mtg
26.8.21 – 5.0	Update on Due Diligence by Deloitte	President	September	Provide Update in September Mtg
28.10.21 – 6.1	Report from Registrar on Exam Results, Progressions and Awards for 2019/20 and 2020/21	Registrar	December	Report will be provided after ARC Meeting
28.10.21 – 6.1	Update Risk Register for mitigating actions relating to acquisition of additional space	Sec/VP Fin Services	December	Report will be provided after the ARC meeting
28.10.21 – 6.3.5	Sponsorship Policy – amend for approval	Sec/VP Fin Services	November	Policy to be circulated for Approval