

Minutes of: Audit Committee

Date: 1:30pm on 16th June 2025 **Location:** A5, College Road Campus

Present	In attendance
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Judy Balderson (<i>Acting Chair</i>) ▪ Kate Seekings ▪ Chritsy Bolderson <p>Collectively referred to as the “Committee” and individually as a “Committee Member”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Jonathan Maddock (<i>Internal Auditor from TIAA, "TIAA Auditor"</i>) ▪ Jon Marchant (<i>External Auditor from Forvis Mazars, "Mazars Auditor"</i>) Collectively referred to as the “Auditors” ▪ Tim Williams (<i>Finance Director</i>) ▪ Jane Simons (<i>College Accountant</i>) ▪ Abigail Appleton (<i>Principal & CEO</i>) collectively referred to as the "Officers" ▪ Abigail Boyce (<i>Clerk to the Corporation, "Clerk"</i>)
<p>Quoracy: Meeting was quorate in accordance with paragraph 1 below.</p>	<p>Absent: Jennette Arnold</p>

1. Quorum

The meeting was duly convened as a quorum as three members was present, satisfying the quorum requirement set out in Section 2, Clause 2.3 of the Standing Orders (*Audit Committee of Reference*).

2. Apologies and Declarations

- a. **Apologies for absence:** In the absence of the Chair, Jennette Arnold, whose apologies had been received, Judy Balderson kindly agreed to chair the meeting.
- b. **Declarations of interest:** there were no new declarations of interest.

3. Confidential discussion with Auditors without Officers Present: A confidential record of this item has been noted separately and is not included in these public minutes.

4. Minutes of last meeting

- a. **Approval of minutes of meeting held on 07th April 2025:** The Committee approved the minutes of the previous meeting as an accurate record. It was noted that Chritsy Bolderson did not participate in the approval, as she was not a member of the Committee at the time of the meeting.
- b. **Matters Arising:** All actions were noted as either complete or in progress, as detailed in the action log.

5. Internal Auditors Reports

a. Assurance Review and Business Continuity

The TIAA Auditor presented the internal audit recommendations, drawing particular attention to areas relating to the Business Continuity Plan (BCP). It was noted that the IT Disaster Recovery Policy requires updating to address existing gaps; a contact list should be incorporated into the BCP; and the plan should be subject to formal testing on an annual basis. The Auditor also highlighted the need for training of key members of the disaster

recovery team in the event the plan is enacted. Furthermore, a Business Impact Assessment should be undertaken to identify key systems requiring recovery moving forward, with the impact assessment plan to be completed first. A Governor queried about the target dates, and suggested these be brought forward for consideration at the March Board meeting. The Finance Director confirmed that the dates would be reviewed and the amended report recirculated to the Committee. It was further confirmed that the test plan would be implemented by the end of 2026.

b. Follow Up Review

The TIAA Auditor presented an overview of the report and invited questions. A Governor inquired about item 9, seeking an update on its progress. The Finance Director confirmed that approximately one-third of the work has been completed and that the deadline for completion is 31 August.

c. Internal Audit Report on Staff Recruitment and Training

The TIAA Auditor presented the report, during which the Acting Chair raised several queries on behalf of the Committee Chair. It was noted that alignment with the RDI Policy is currently missing but will be incorporated. A further query was raised regarding the 2024 Stress at Work Policy, and it was confirmed that this is being reviewed and will be submitted to the September Finance and General Purposes Committee meeting. The Professional Code of Conduct was reviewed in March and is nearing completion. With regard to Pay and Progression, this remains ongoing, led by the Principal, with regular updates to be provided to the FGP Committee and the internal staff group. A Governor commended the progress made on training. A question was raised about staff recruitment costs, with a request to review these figures, alongside metrics such as staff turnover and job satisfaction. It was confirmed that these areas fall within the remit of the FGP Committee and the Staff Wellbeing Strategy, which is also reported to the Board. The exit survey process was queried, and TIAA clarified that participation is optional and the process is understood. Succession planning was also discussed, with emphasis on identifying risk areas linked to staff expansion.

d. Summary Internal Controls Assurance Report (SICA) and Sector briefing

The TIAA Auditor reviewed the report and confirmed that no fraud has been identified since the last meeting. A Governor queried the college's responsiveness to the recommendations, to which TIAA responded that the college is generally very receptive, although it has reasonably challenged one or two recommendations, which is to be expected.

e. Internal Audit Annual Report 2024/25

The TIAA Auditor presented the report. A Governor asked about the relationship between this year's figures and those from the previous year, and whether the data is carried forward. TIAA clarified that the figures do not feed through year to year. It was noted that a number of issues identified relate to governance, with most findings categorised under compliance. TIAA explained that the audit focuses on specific areas within the College as part of a three-year plan. The Finance Director will share the draft plan with the Committee ahead of the next meeting.

6. Mazars' Audit strategy memorandum (financial statements auditors)

The Mazars Auditor presented the report, noting that it reflected similar themes to the previous year. They outlined the audit timetable, explaining that some routine work had been brought forward to alleviate pressure at the year-end (July). The Auditor provided an overview of their audit approach and team processes, emphasising the importance of maintaining professional scepticism and ensuring appropriate challenge throughout the audit. A Governor queried whether the external auditors would receive copies of the funding agreement. The Auditor confirmed that it must be formally requested, and the Finance Director added that it is also publicly available online. They also explained how liabilities are assessed, noting that these are based on specific assumptions which inform the final figures. There were no further questions from governors.

7. Data returns schedule

The Finance Director presented an updated returns schedule, intended to assure the Committee that key returns were submitted on time. Committee members questioned its value, suggesting it offered limited insight and could be misleading if incomplete. While it was noted that RSM recommended the document, and some colleges use similar checklists, the External Auditor confirmed it's not standard practice. The Committee requested clarification from RSM and recommended providing a single annual assurance statement instead.

8. Audit Recommendation Tracking Report

The Finance Director presented the report, drawing attention to key areas and proposed updates. It was noted that the Business Continuity Plan would be added, while the E-Safety and IT Security policies would remain on the tracker until updated. A Committee Member queried how the tracker aligns with the Internal Auditors' recommendations. The Finance Director clarified that the tracker incorporates follow-up audits. The Committee Member suggested that a full list of outstanding recommendations would be clearer and easier to track.

9. Risk Management Register

The Finance Director presented minor updates to the Risk Management Register, noting that some operational risks may be removed as they are not strategic. A governor asked how risk assessments are aligned and tracked across the College. The Finance Director confirmed that various assessments exist (e.g. IT, fraud, health & safety). It was noted that the approach to tracking and reporting risks to the Committee, and how these align with strategic objectives, is under review, with a view to strengthening overall assurance.

10. Annual Fraud Risk Assessment

The Finance Director explained that while ACOP is no longer applicable, its framework remains useful. A Committee member inquired about fraud finance, and the Auditors confirmed that it was reviewed with no issues identified in the internal audit. The Committee agreed that fraud and cybersecurity training should be provided to Governors before this assessment.

11. Annual Committee items:

a. Election of Committee Chair 2025/26

In line with the College's process, the Clerk invited Committee members to comment on the Chair election prior to the meeting. The Committee confirmed that Jennette Arnold will continue as Chair of the Audit Committee for the coming academic year. This recommendation will be submitted to the Governing Body for approval in accordance with Standing Orders. The Committee thanked Jennette Arnold for her ongoing leadership and commitment.

b. Self-Assessment of Committee 2024/25

The Committee acknowledged this as an accurate reflection of its current performance. The Acting Chair noted the Clerk’s intention to revise the Terms of Reference.

12. Close of Business and Date of Next Meeting

With no further business to discuss, the Chair closed the meeting at 15:23. The next meeting is scheduled for Monday 01 December 2025, at 1:30 PM.

Minutes approved: Date: