

Executive Council Meeting
Friday 15th May 2026
Oriam, Heriot-Watt / Zoom

Minutes

NOTE: Pre-meeting chit-chat from 1000, meeting starts 1030

In attendance:

Jonny Pearson	(JP)
Stew Fowlie	(SF)
Ben Graham	(BG)
Ian Lowe	(IL)
Chris Sellar	(CS)
Anna Edvaldsson	(AE)
Julia Stenhouse-Walton	(JSW)
Liv Stevens	(LS)
Savannah Antoine (Virtual)	(SA)
Katherine Duncan	(KD)
Jude Edwards – BUCS	(JE)

Apologies:

Bob Wyllie – sportscotland (BW)

Approx. Timings

- **Welcome, intro and scene setting** (5 min)
A special note of welcome to Jude Edwards, BUCS Director of Business Operations.
The committee did a round of introductions.
- **Homologation** (10 min)
 - Apologies for absence
 - Noted as above.
 - Conflicts of interest
 - No conflicts of interest were noted.
 - Minutes of last meeting(s) & matters arising
 - The minutes from the previous meeting in February 2026 were accepted as a true and accurate reflection. The outstanding actions from previous meeting were discussed.
- **Current Context** (20 min)
 - Around the network – verbal updates
 - Institutional perspectives – open forum

JP opened the conversation noting an increase in funding at Edinburgh College, which is unprecedented. Has allowed a little more optimism across the college network. SA highlighted participation at West College Scotland has been increasing across the period. Notes the ESOL football tournament success with international students studying English. Have been promoted to the next division for BUCS football. JP notes & recognises the success

of the Active Campus programme. JE asks about how to improve communications regarding the entry deadlines, and SA notes a group for colleges to discuss would be helpful.

LS notes planning period at UoE & reflects on a year with a new staff team. The two sport activators will continue into a second year. Planning submission has been returned, with success of achieving a small increase in funding & some increase in club grant funding. Notes on research on student attainment & presenting this internally and have linked this with the UoE participation grant. Have been successful in bid to increase this grant also. With a note on handover process with the incoming sabb officer.

AE on Strath with notes on grant staying flat, which has been the trend for the past few years. Discuss whether lobbying campaign required to support with a potential increase. Alumni fund being under pressure with higher number of applications due to pressure on clubs with increase on home facility costs. New Sabb officer to come in June 1st. Difficulty with garnering support for Wednesday afternoons from internal university depts.

CS notes HW had a really good year, but with its own financial challenges. HW sport is seen as a great return on investment to the University. The attainment through sport continues to be positive and taking on board by the university. New sport strategy this next year, and there's real connection on what Oriam is trying to do alongside with what the University are trying to do, esp along strategic partners. In a good place with University buy in and 10 years since Oriam opened. Looking to do an impact report of 10 years of Oriam, with an event on the 4th of November to celebrate. BG notes HW have been doing a membership review, which is coming to a close. Now looking to make the system work how they want it to. Current Principal is retiring with new Principal coming in, but notes success of scholarships and recognition of this at University Court.

IG on RGU, had a really good year regarding student engagement. Has been challenging re inexperienced student body, however had a really strong student body turn up for the elections. Sports club member successful in the election. Wish to recognise work of Phoebe by supporting the clubs – notes continuation of free sports membership for students (c.4000 students). Notes further investment needed into the facility in the next few years. Great work, creates more work, and lots of movement regarding RGU stance to graduate employability. Surveys have gone out regarding sport impact on student experience, with high scores turning out on mental health & achievement. Challenging sports club budgets have reduced. Concerned about travel costs. Sport building is to be 'Dennis Law' facility and notes changes regarding Dennis Law Legacy Trust Integration into RGU Sport.

KD on UoE Sport doesn't yet have indicative funding on next year. Value of Sport 2 which demonstrates about attainment & employability which has been received well by Uni. Notes around WP students gaining more through volunteering regarding employability skills. Capital development under pressure due to funding challenges. Good working in community space, which is scholarship students delivering in the community. Piloting Friday afternoon sport with the local communities with staff volunteering opportunities Refreshing leisure & management systems currently, & hoping to launch in July.

- SSS Comps (BG), Dev (KD)

KD on Development Committee. Lots of great work, noting range of work rather than depth of work. Operational plan in moving well, but with some deviation of topics. Opportunity appeared to focus work on Wednesday afternoons, which was taken up. Focusing a bit more on data insight and how this can complement academic work. Conference planning is looking healthy & still sign ups to come through. Move to do some early bird,

helped set the agenda earlier. Coach Like A Girl programme has been challenging to deliver this year. Accessing facilities has been challenging & commitment from partners has been challenging. Active health group has moved to more bespoke offering. KD gave recognition to JD for his phenomenal work this year. CS asking about grouping the ACC with the active wellbeing staff. SF notes there is a connect there, but is just figuring the right mechanism. CS also asks CLAG whether this can be linked in MOU programme? JD & KD notes potential, but it does need a figure to lead the programme. Discussion had around CLAG with access to resources/training models.

BG on Competitions Committee. Three big events, Conference Finals – with a great group of volunteers & notes SC a great job well done. SS Finals at Oriam, with another great day and College Finals the end of last month. Notes about challenges about desktop work & supporting volunteers in specific roles. Notes around how National Squads have worked the past year and challenges that has come with the workloads. Competitions programmes in terms of budgets & number of participants has been very positive. Concerns regarding centralised fixtures, and some concerns over futsal participation. Moving to IA approvals model, which has come with its own learnings. Discussion had on National squads, with pros & cons.

- **Partners in focus** **(45 min)**
 - **Sportscotland** (SF on behalf on BW)
 - SSS core investment 26/27

Core investment has gone up by sportscotland quite significantly, up by around £33K, which is now baseline investment. Announcements from the Scottish Gov budget, and we've been trying to position ourselves in response to the different pots of money. SSS has been moved into position as the gateway for bids coming from university & colleges.

- Additional funding streams for SSS network
 - Summer of Sport

Deadline was recently, we put in a bid on behalf of the network and hope that this will be taken on. We would need a secondary process to support with the bids that we internally have received from across the network. Some members are also linked in regarding LA bids which does cause some cross over throughout the network.

- Club Support Programme

Reoccurring funding of £5mil. Allowing clubs to build capacity, funding & work opportunities. SSS have been given an indicative figure (£75K) which would equal 2.5 posts in the network. Deadline is next week. Secondary deadline in Sept, but will discuss this timeline with sportscotland. Some concept work has already been undertaken. Discussion had about logistics of employment of these posts in the network. CS asks does this specifically need to be staff & SF confirms that it does.

- Growth & Innovation

We don't have a dedicated allocation, but encouraged to see where the interest is. Discussion at CEO forum yesterday, regarding new opportunities and ideas. Deadline for this fund is in August. Thoughts on exploring opportunities with data & insight, opportunities with sharing education with our network etc. JE notes about BUCS literature review on next generation of students. IL any inside about how sportscotland tracking bids &

where the money is actually going, highlighting current ad-hoc opportunities for funding through governing bodies. SF notes no solution at the moment.

- **BUCS**

- BUCS Regions and Nations Update - May 2026

Been an interesting & really busy cycle. More than 25,000 fixtures completed at a 95% completion rate. Team entries are already open. Conference Finals went well across 16 sports, and thanks to St Andrews for hosting the Scottish Conference. New sports framework with Padel Champs being introduced. BUCS Super Rugby will be moving to a new format next year. International is starting to ramp up, with EUSA & WUGS on the horizon. Potential opps with hoping hosting international comps in UK. Events have been scoring well. SLT are trying to be vary aware of communications that are coming out & trying to be more efficient with this. Looking at a comms roadmap within 3-6 months.

Leagues & knockout consultation with the roadshow coming to Scotland on the 27th of May. BUCS are reviewing governance structures including all membership groups as well as an eligibility review. EDI progressing with the belonging strategy with support of more data research have been undertaken. BUCS have launched student survey so ask for members to promote this. Excited about the club culture summit happening on the 5th of June & BUCS conference & awards in July. Key staff appointments inc Ben O'Connell as member trustee, focussing on Wellbeing & Safeguarding. Board have approved the budget, with team entries at 0% increase with the event entries increasing by 1%. This is due to successful efforts through commercial support.

SF asks:

1. Can we remind BUCS staff to progress on joint collaboration agreements between BUCS & SSS staff?
2. Complete Uni guide data, could we get the Scottish data?¹
3. League & knockout meetings, is the roadshow a listening exercise or is there a solution?

JE agreed to 1. & 2. and noted 3. That is to hear feedback but there are suggested outcomes. Discussion had recognising the range of different needs across the sector. Discussion had on communication with BUCS & their communication review. BG asks around the review of the articles of association and how this links into governance review. JE notes this enabled the next stage of the governance review. KD asks about the club summit, and what are the desired outcomes from this. JE hoping for good actions and also the network this will build around this conversation.

- **Strong Organisation**

(30 min)

- **Finance (JSW)**

- April figures & updated 2526 forecast

Really big swing in the competitions programme. Big savings in conjunctions with bumper entries on specific events in programmes. Increase around 10% of sportscotland funding.

- **Planning for 2026/7 (SF)**

- Recruitment Proposal

Discussion had regarding the recruitment proposal. Looking to go out to market ASAP. The recruitment proposal was approved by the committee. ⁱ

¹ BUCS to supply Scottish data from complete Uni guide data

- **LUNCH @12:30** (30 min)
- **SSS Awards (JSW)** (30 min)

All awards scoring returned from committee members and outright winners in each category.
Two Honorary President's Medals agreed upon & to be presented at SSS Awards.

- **Equality Action Plan** (20 min)

Discussion had regarding the Equality Action Plan, and SF & KD provided a summary of the journey to get to the new plan. The Equality Action Plan was approved by the committeeⁱⁱ

- **SSS Showcase (SF & JSW)** (20 min)

JSW gave an overview of the Showcase work and noted that MB was surprised by the lack of interest in the event by his contacts. The event may need to be postponed and look to be rescheduled at a future point in time. Despite this, the process has been interesting and we have enjoyed exploring this new avenue of corporate sponsorship and philanthropy.

- **AOCB** (15 min)
 - **Reward & Recognition (JP)**

JP gave an overview of the Reward & recognition paper. JP noted excellent work the SSS Team has done across the year in extremely difficult circumstances. Reward & Recognition paper was approved by the committee.ⁱⁱⁱ

- **Closing remarks, future meetings and actions** (5 min)

CS notes lack of pathway for college work to be celebrated at SSS Awards. Suggested project or impact award to be added regarding ACC work. CS to lead Awards review group to be done in 26/27.²

Actions

1. BUCS to supply Scottish data from complete Uni guide data
2. CS to lead Awards review group to be done in 26/27

Decisions

- A. ⁱThe Recruitment proposal was approved
- B. ⁱⁱ The Equality Action Plan was approved
- C. ⁱⁱⁱ The Reward & Recognition paper was approved

² CS to lead Awards review group to be done in 26/27