



GIG  
CYMRU  
NHS  
WALES

Ymddiriedolaeth Brifysgol GIG  
Gwasanaethau Ambiwylans Cymru  
Welsh Ambulance Services  
University NHS Trust

## ACADEMIC PARTNERSHIP COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2024/25

### INTRODUCTION

1. The Trust's Standing Orders and Committee Terms of Reference require that Board Committees evaluate their effectiveness annually and present an annual report to the Trust Board.
2. As the factors underpinning effective governance can change, for example as people leave, organisations restructure, or strategy shifts, regular reviews of Board Committees ensure governance remains fit for purpose.
3. Standing Orders, committee terms of reference, and codes of governance provide that boards should routinely assess the effectiveness of their governance arrangements, of which the board's committees form an integral part.
4. The committee met on 23 January 2025 and through a facilitated discussion reviewed its effectiveness, its terms of reference, and its operating arrangements. This Annual Report reflects on the effectiveness of the committee in 2024/25 and proposes changes to terms of reference.

### PURPOSE OF THE COMMITTEE

5. The purpose of the Committee set out in its terms of reference reflects the maturing University Trust Status (UTS) journey. The committee that its remit with a mixture of *scrutiny* (particularly with respect to refreshed UTS priorities, obtaining and maintaining UTS status), *partnering* (ensuring the right partners are on the Committee, that appropriate arrangements are in place with partners), *connecting* (existing and new partners to research/programmes of work in WAST), and *inquisitorial* (drilling down into elements of the priorities and other programmes where we are partnering with academic and industry to foster and promote).

## MEMBERSHIP AND ATTENDANCE

6. The committee met four times as scheduled in 2024/25 and was quorate on each occasion. The Committee met in private session on three occasions in July and November 2024.
7. The committee has been supported by the Chair and three Non-Executive Directors as members, and a number of prescribed attendees. The chart below illustrates attendance of members and attendees as listed in the terms of reference for 2024/25.

COMMITTEE ATTENDANCE				
Name	23 April 2024	July 2024	18 November 2024	23 January 2025
Hannah Rowan				
Prof Kevin Davies				
Ceri Jackson				
Prof Hayley Hutchings				
Jayne Beeslee				
Estelle Hitchon				
Angela Lewis				
Carl Kneeshaw				
Andy Swinburn				
Jonny Sammut	Aled Williams			Aasha Cowey
Jonathan Turnbull-Ross				
Duncan Robertson				
Jonathan Chippendale			Kerry Robertshaw	
Prof Nigel Rees				
James Houston				Alex Crawford
Jo Kelso				
Trish Mills		Julie Boalch		
Mark Marsden				
Keith Rogers				

	Attended
	Deputy attended
	Apologies received
	No longer member

8. The membership of the committee was revised effective quarter four of 2024/25 in response to changes to the Non-Executive Director membership of the Trust Board. This includes the academic Non-Executive Director Hayley Hutchings, appointed in November 2024. Hayley attended the meeting of the committee in November 2024.

## COMMITTEE'S VIEWS ON EFFECTIVENESS

### Feedback from membership

9. The Committee's effectiveness was assessed through a facilitated discussion held at the meeting on the 23 January 2025, which included a review of its terms of reference and cycle of business.

#### **Enhancing Report Writing and Assurance**

- A common theme is the desire for greater use of presentations - including visuals and even short videos - as alternatives to written papers. This approach is seen as more engaging, interactive, and less burdensome for report authors, especially given current workload pressures.
- Respondents also called for brevity and clarity, with succinct summaries that clearly outline what is required from the committee. Enhancements could include a clearer purpose for each paper, better alignment with strategic frameworks (e.g., HCRW and other plans), and focused, action-oriented content.
- Other suggestions included:
  - Making the cycle of business more predictable to aid planning
  - Reassessing the SBAR format, which some find repetitive
  - Including key metrics or statistics (e.g. research participation numbers) to support decision-making.
  - Clarifying the expected breadth and depth of content, so authors can better meet the committee's needs.

#### **Strengths of the Committee**

- Feedback highlights the committee's strong and inclusive leadership, with particular praise for the Chair's ability to encourage open, respectful, and productive discussions. The Chair is commended for creating space for all voices, especially new members and observers, and for maintaining focus while allowing conversations to flow naturally.
- The committee is described as a welcoming and safe space, fostering high engagement, open dialogue, and creative thinking. Members feel motivated to attend and contribute, with the use of chat features further supporting inclusive participation.

## Areas for Improvement

- Suggestions for improvement reflect a desire to refine the committee's remit, focus, and ways of working as it continues to mature. Several comments highlight the need to reassess the scope, particularly regarding innovation, digital, and cyber assurance - areas that align with strategic priorities but may not be fully embedded in other committees.
  - With a refocus on the remit, key issues to consider include revisiting membership to ensure appropriate representation; enhance education and training discussions and alignment with academic partners (particularly around undergraduate and postgraduate development); name change of the committee to follow.
10. Following the successful achievement of University Trust Status, the committee originally established to support that ambition has naturally reached a point where its purpose requires refocus and revitalisation. While the committee has continued to provide oversight of research, its broader direction has lacked clarity. Looking ahead, it is proposed to align the committee more explicitly with the Trust's strategic objective to "be at the forefront of innovation and technology". This would see the committee's remit refocused around three core pillars: research, innovation, and technology/digital.
11. This change reflects a wider board ambition to define "what good looks like" in the delivery of long-term strategic goals. For this particular objective, the emphasis for 2025/26 is expected to be primarily digital. Enabling a more coherent and integrated approach may mean transferring digital, including information governance, information security, and cyber, from the Finance and Performance Committee to this committee. The committee will also play a key role in assuring the Board that relevant frameworks - such as the HCRW research governance framework - are being effectively implemented and meet organisational requirements. Recognising existing resource constraints within the Research and Innovation Team, the potential for developing meaningful KPIs will be explored while remaining mindful of capacity.
12. To support this transitional work, the committee has endorsed a revised meeting schedule of three sessions in 2025/26, allowing time for the Executive Leadership Team to shape the refreshed remit, with a further discussion on effectiveness planned for July 2025. This was agreed by the board in January 2025.
13. Because of the above, the terms of reference and cycle of business of this committee have not been amended or refreshed for 2025/26 as yet but will be once the discussions above take place.

## Management of the committee's work programme

14. The committee has a cycle of business that is aligned to its terms of reference. All matters scheduled for oversight and review have been brought to the committee. The committee's business in 2024/25 included:

- (a) Following the Trust's application for **University Trust Status** (UTS) this was approved effective 01 April 2024. The committee oversaw the introduction of this designation and the change of the Trust's name to the Welsh Ambulance Services University NHS Trust. Throughout the year the Committee discussed the benefits which could be borne from having UTS, and this work will continue into 2025/26. Discussions regarding benefits include how well positioned the Trust is as a learning organisation of excellence, and the importance of realising benefits which relate to quality and evidence-based practices.
- (b) The **UTS priorities** for inclusion in the Trust's Integrated Medium-Term Plan (IMTP) 2025-28 were discussed and endorsed. These included a commitment to learning, enhancing academic and industry partnerships, and establishing a centre of excellence (by 2028); all of which align to the Trust's long-term strategy 'Delivering Excellence' and the Trust's commitment to the Duty of Quality.
- (c) Hannah Rowan, Committee Chair, provided updates to the Committee in her capacity as the Trust's **Research Champion Non-Executive Director**. Additionally, in January 2025, Jayne Beeslee, Non-Executive Director who joined the Trust Board in August observed the meeting as part of her induction.
- (d) In January the committee received a lived experience from **Hayley Stevens, Advanced Paramedic Practitioner**, who attended to share her experience of undertaking the MSc in Advanced Clinical Practice and an overview of the dissertation on comparing independent prescribing to Patient Group Direction use in a general practitioner out-of-hours service: a retrospective cross-sectional service evaluation. Members commended Hayley for the significant work undertaken to translate a dissertation into a published paper.
- (e) The Committee received updates from colleagues regarding the implementation of the **Health and Care Research Wales (HCRW) Research and Development Framework**. The way in which WAST implements the ten pillars of this framework has showcased the significant amount of research and innovation underway at the Trust, however the committee recognise there is more to do on this framework to identify further opportunities to strengthen and support it at WAST.

- (f) The development of **research and innovation Key Performance Indicators** (KPIs) was discussed, and work will continue on the development of these in 2025/26.
  - (g) The Trust's approach to **Research and Innovation** was discussed, with the next steps for enhancing our capabilities considered. There was a commitment to support the integration of research strategies and objectives across all areas of the Trust to ensure that they become fully embedded into our culture and operations. The need to prioritise development of the structures and processes to support this approach were acknowledged.
  - (h) The committee continued to oversee and support the campaign for the recruitment of the **academic Non-Executive Director** on the Trust Board. As indicated above, Hayley Hutchings was appointed in Autumn 2024 effective 11 November 2024. The membership of the committee has changed to reflect this appointment as well as the planned turnover of non-executive directors on the Board.
  - (i) A spotlight session on the **innovation and the use of drone technology** was received. This discussed how the Trust is exploring the use of drone technology within its operations to enhance emergency response capabilities.
  - (j) The Committee **cycle of business** was approved.
  - (k) There are no formal **risks** on the corporate risk register for this committee, however the risks related to capacity to take forward the research and innovation agenda were discussed
  - (l) The **annual effectiveness review** was conducted in the January 2025 meeting. At this meeting the committee endorsed the proposal to meet three times in 2025/26 as opposed to four, to afford time for the Executive Leadership Team to undertake the necessary work on the remit of the committee, with a further discussion on effectiveness planned for July 2025.
15. The committee is required to promote and support the exploration of opportunities with higher and further education providers, commercial partners, and wider community partners for collaboration. The purpose of these sections 3.1 to 3.3 in the terms of reference and the way in which the committee discharges these were explored in the January meeting. A wider discussion will take place at the July 2025 meeting as part of the continued review of the terms of reference.]. The Chair of the committee, Hannah Rowan, is the Non-Executive Director Research Champion for the Trust. Additionally, Nigel Rees, the Assistant Director of Research and Innovation, is active in the research community. The

promotion of WAST is brought through to committee by the Chair's updates on the champion community and the research governance framework by Nigel Rees.

16. The board received a highlight report from this committee by email circulation following each meeting which included alerts, advice, and areas of assurance. This was also presented to the next public board meeting by the Chair of the committee.

## SUB-COMMITTEES AND TASK AND FINISH GROUPS

17. The committee is not currently serviced by a sub-committee.

## COMMITTEE PRIORITIES

### Priorities for 2024/25

18. The Committee received an update on progress against its 2024/25 priorities at each meeting and as can be seen below progress on agreed priorities has been good: It is noted that the Committee revised its priorities mid-year from those which were agreed by the Trust Board in May 2024, and the revised priorities are included in the below table:

Priority	Progress
Clarity on the purpose and focus of the Committee to be communicated to the wider organisation.	The discussions regarding this priority will continue into 2025/26 now that the academic Non-Executive Director, Hayley Hutchings, is in post. See above regarding changes to the remit of the committee overall.
Articulating the benefits realisation of University Trust Status (UTS).	The Committee discussed the benefits realisation from UTS at its meeting on the 19 July 2024 and a follow up item was received at the Committee meeting on 18 November 2024. An update on the work to date was presented to the Committee in January 2025, and this work will continue into 2025/26.

### Priorities for 2025/26

19. It is good practice for Committees to set priorities for the forthcoming year when they review their effectiveness. However, at this stage given the discussions due to take place in Q2 on the overall remit of the committee, it may not be appropriate to do so in 2025/26 given that the main priority will be in ensuring the scope of work, membership and programme is appropriate.