

Royal College of Occupational Therapists (RCOT) Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes

Date	22 January 2026
Location	Phoenix House, 106-114 Borough High Street, London, SE1 1LB
Status	APPROVED
Date approved	RCOT Board of Trustees meeting held on 15 April 2026
Classification	For publishing behind member paywall

Trustees present

Name	Position	Items
Odeth Richardson	Trustee, Chair	All
Aisling Durkin	Trustee, Northern Ireland	All
Jackie Gordon	Trustee, England	All
Neil Carnegie	Trustee, Scotland	All
Cathryn Holding	Trustee, Industrial relations	All
Paul Dunning	Trustee, Wales	All
Janine Hackett	Trustee, Learning and Development	All
Dr Sureshkumar Kamalakannan	Trustee, International Affairs	All
Dr Anita Atwal	Trustee, Research and Development	All

In attendance

Name	Position	Items
Gary Waltham	CEO	All
Satvinder Reyatt	Deputy CEO	All
CJ Odeleye	Interim Associate Director of Finance	All
Clare Cochrane	Director of Brand and Marketing	All
Karin Orman	Director of Practice and Innovation	All
Kate Monro	Head of Governance and Compliance	All
Rob Smyth	Director of Strategy, Technology and Transformation	All
Angela Daniel	Senior Business Support Partner, minute taker	All
Sankeetha Nadarajah	Managing Editor – BJOT	5
Patricia McClure	Chair, Audit, Risk & Investment Committee	8

Observers [Redacted information – for reasons of confidentiality]

Please note: Items are recorded in agenda item order rather than the order in which they were taken.

Item	Main point
1.	Meeting opens: introductions and apologies Introductions were given for observers.
2.	Meeting governance and administration
2.1.	Declaration of conflict of interest No declarations were made.
2.2.	Review of matters arising A request was made to include a sustainability item on the agenda for the April meeting.
2.3.	Approval of RCOT Board of Trustee minutes A repetition was noted of a paragraph on page two of the minutes. A question was raised relating to the circulation of the joint minutes. These were shared with Board members on 8 October and noted in the matters arising. Resolution The Board approved the 2 October 2025 RCOT Board of Trustees minutes subject to corrections. Action - AD/KM to recirculate the joint minutes from July 2025. - SLT to bring a sustainability item to the meeting in April.
2.4	Written resolutions It was noted that the following resolutions had been passed following the written resolution procedure: - Approval of the HS 1.0 Overview HSMS; HS 2.0 H&S Policy Statement; HS 3.0 H&S Policy; HS 4.0 Workplace health and safety welfare. - Approval of the updated policy on observing Council and Board meeting. - Approval of the extension of the technology support contract with Wavex. - Delegation of authority to the Audit, Investment and Risk Committee (Finance Sub-group) to conduct the tender process for a Managed Office Delivery Partner for Phoenix House and to recommend a suitable candidate to the Board for approval. - Approval of the revised Trustee and Committee member Code of Conduct.
3.	Standing management reports Purpose / issue for consideration The standing report was presented to ensure the Board was abreast of key developments and achievements since the last meeting. Key points highlighted were: - Strategic progress and transformation completion - New CEO introductions and early priorities

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	- Financial and Commercial position - Membership engagement - Colleague engagement and culture The following standing reports were also presented: - Monthly management accounts - Membership growth - Organisational performance report - Risk report Resolution None. Actions - KO to explore and report back on potential approaches to strengthen collaboration between the organisation and university based societies. - CC to provide a written update to the Board by the end of February detailing progress on recovering annual card paying members, including the remaining risks and financial implications. - GW and SLT to review the commercial income governance framework, particularly to introduce more rigour around risk and reputational management, and to report back to the Board. - RS to contact Board members to explore key performance indicators (revisiting denominators and comparisons to better measure impact). Key factors considered and/or discussed by the Board
3.1	CEO report – presented by the Director of People, Finance and Governance - The period with an Interim CEO had concluded and comprehensive reports (final interim priorities, transformation programme review, Q1 financial update and 2025/26 priorities) had been previously circulated, capturing achievements, ongoing challenges, and operational delivery focus for the months ahead. - The financial position had started to move into a favourable position, and a prudent approach had been taken to setting the 2025/26 financial plan. This rigor and discipline would continue under the new CEO's leadership to ensure a 2025/26 balanced budget and working towards long-term financial sustainability. - The transformation programme had formally ended, but further work was needed to embed the changes and fully realise expected benefits. - Regarding commercial partnerships, the Board discussed evolving commercial activity and improving governance, including potential separation into dedicated structures, as well as exploring member led or internal models to generate income. - Professional leadership posts across the UK were declining, particularly in England's NHS and academic sectors. - Progress during the period was recognised.
3.2	Monthly management accounts – presented by the Director of Finance - It was confirmed that: - Research funds were drawn from designated reserves, were protected, and remained sufficient to meet current commitments.

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	○ Tax advice had confirmed there was no need for a separate trading entity for the building rental income, as this income directly supported charitable objectives. • The Board noted that long-term financial sustainability would require broader income generation beyond tenancy and membership fees, including exploring education, research activity, and opportunities to draw on expertise within the wider professional community.
3.3	Membership growth update – presented by the Director of Brand and Marketing • Membership recruitment and acquisition had exceeded budget expectations, particularly among professional members, while student membership remained lower but was expected to improve over coming quarters. • Challenges with lapsing processes, especially for members who pay annually by card, had created discrepancies between member numbers and income, and work was underway to resolve issues in the payment systems and re-engage those affected. The Board requested an update on this issue. • Regarding student engagement, it was noted that current volunteer-led approaches were only partly effective and that stronger relationships with HEIs were needed. The Board highlighted the importance of supporting academic staff, building visibility on campuses, improving induction resources, and strengthening links with university societies. The importance of in-person engagement for students was raised.
3.4	Organisational performance reports for August, September and October 2025 – presented by the Director of Strategy, Technology and Transformation • Most indicators had performed at or above expectations. • Improvements were underway to refine reporting formats, including clearer rating presentations and enhanced accuracy around lapsing data. • A question was raised about the potential development of a mobile app, with clarification that no detailed exploration had yet taken place and that any app would have limited functionality due to existing standalone systems and associated costs.
3.5	Risk report – presented by the Head of Governance and Compliance • It was noted that a number of risks had been reduced following a period of taking a very conservative approach to ratings, while mitigation actions were embedded. • Questions were raised about the downgrading of climate related risks, and it was clarified that while climate change remained a significant long-term concern, its immediate impact on organisational strategy appeared less likely to escalate within the current strategic period. • Cybersecurity and data protection were discussed as ongoing moderate risks, with reassurance provided that cultural shifts, strengthened processes, clearer role responsibilities, and improved technical safeguards had significantly improved risk management, although data protection would always remain an area requiring close attention.
4.	Strategic discussion and decision-making
4.1	Member value proposition Purpose / issue for consideration

Item	Main point
	The Board was asked to provide feedback on the development of the Member Value Proposition (MVP). Resolution None. Actions None. Key factors considered and/or discussed by the Board - Recent research indicated that overall member satisfaction was medium/low, with requests for more tailored support, easier access to resources, and a stronger sense of belonging. The MVP project aims to develop clear, evidence-based membership offers for each category to ensure RCOT investments aligns with what members value most. - Work completed so far included internal workshops, early focus groups, and ongoing quantitative testing. - Emerging themes highlighted the importance of professional identity, community, access to resources, and wellbeing support. The full report would be brought to the board for discussion in April. - It was noted that member expectations had evolved and that strong research was essential. Issues such as email fatigue, poor targeting, and limited engagement from less active members could impact survey uptake. Widening outreach through networks, unions, and more personalised communication was suggested. - Representativeness of the focus groups, the heterogeneity of participants, and the need for clearer hypotheses and more participatory research methods was discussed. - Other points included utilising existing data and the importance of understanding the needs of different member groups, including non-registered staff. - It was noted that the project was intended not only to gather insights but also to create a sustainable model for conducting this type of work internally.
4.2	Annual conference Purpose / issue for consideration The Board was updated on progress in identifying the most effective and sustainable future delivery model for RCOT's Annual Conference. This included assessing potential external partners, exploring alternative delivery approaches such as in-house delivery, and reviewing operational, financial and accessibility considerations. Resolution None. Actions CC would bring a full proposal back to the Board in February, including plans to deliver an in-person conference in the next financial year. Key factors considered and/or discussed by the Board

Item	Main point
4.3	- The CEO committed to holding an in-person annual conference. Timings would be confirmed but it would not be this financial year due to significant lead-in times required for venue booking and event delivery. - A more sustainable, cost-effective inhouse delivery model was being explored with experiences from other organisations and modelling work supporting comparison of options before making a recommendation to the Board. - It was suggested that the event could be positioned as a global conference, noting the potential benefits of working with a provider experienced in large global congresses New standards for pre-registration education and early careers Purpose / issue for consideration The Board was asked to approve the following standards: - Learning and development standards for pre-registration education - From education to practice: early career standards for occupational therapists - The standards aimed to strengthen education quality, support early career occupational therapists, and enhance retention and professional development across the workforce. Resolution The Board was unable to approve the tabled standards at the meeting and agreed to resolve feedback following the meeting. Actions - KO to consult with the Head of Education to produce responses to the feedback raised and propose amendments. - KO to work with brand & marketing team on comms and engagement plan. Key factors considered and/or discussed by the Board The rationale was outlined for the revisions and new standards, the consultation and development process, and the implications for learners, education providers, employers and the wider profession. The Board discussed the newly proposed standards for preregistration education and early careers, recognising positive reception from academic institutions. Some board members felt the standards had gaps/weaknesses, including: - Educator to learner ratios - EDI standards - Use of AI - Maximum number of online hours - Supervision - Minimum attendance. It was noted that being overly restrictive about face-to-face delivery could disadvantage prospective students in remote areas who needed flexible pathways such as online training. Given the detailed feedback it was agreed to move discussed and resolution outside of the Board meeting.
5.	Annual performance report: BJOT annual report

Item	Main point
	Sankeetha Nadarajah, BJOT Managing Editor joined meeting Purpose / issue for consideration An update was provided on the performance, activity and strategic direction of the British Journal of Occupational Therapy (BJOT). Resolution None. Actions CC/SN to ask the editorial board to: report back on rejection data and communicate positive developments (i.e. PubMed indexation) more widely. Key factors considered and/or discussed by the Board Key developments over the past year were outlined, including growth in submissions following PubMed indexation, stable financial performance, ongoing work to diversify the Editorial Board, and progress against the 2025–2028 journal strategy. The Board discussion included: • Whether there were statistics regarding rates of rejection before submissions were sent for full review, particularly among minoritised authors. The existing screening process centred on content and checklist criteria, with plans to review rejection rates, raise standards, diversify contributions, and provide clearer guidance on desired content through presentations and community engagement. • Efforts to improve submission quality included providing detailed screening feedback and a specialist group to support work related to race and culture in the profession, alongside plans for publication workshops.
6.	Policy approvals
6.1	Updated policy register Purpose / issue for consideration The Board was asked to approve the updated policy register. Resolution The Board approved the updated policy register. Actions RS to include a high-level overview of the remit and roles of the relevant committees and boards within the paper, to provide clarity and understanding, next time this is reviewed by the Board. Key factors considered and/or discussed by the Board No further questions from Board.
6.2	Data protection policy update Purpose / issue for consideration

Item	Main point
	The Board was asked to approve the addition of clearly defined roles and responsibilities to the existing Data Protection Policy aimed at strengthening accountability and embedding data protection responsibilities across all levels. Resolution The Board approved the addition of roles and responsibilities to the Data Protection Policy. Actions None. Key factors considered and/or discussed by the Board No further questions from Board.
7.	Lay Trustee Recruitment Purpose / issue for consideration The Board received a short update on the recruitment for lay trustees. [Redacted – confidential]
8.1	Building services tender [Redacted – confidential]
9.	AOB Nikki Daniel, Head of Professional Development, requested two board members to join the Fellowship and Merit Awards Committee. Action KO/ND to circulate further information by email after this meeting.

These minutes were approved by the Board at the meeting held 15 April 2026.	
Signature	<u>Odeth Richardson</u> Odeth Richardson (Apr 16, 2026 15:45:21 GMT+1)
Name	Odeth Richardson
Role	Chair
Date signed	16/04/26

Action summary table [Redacted – confidential]

References [Redacted – confidential]