

The Cathedrals Group of Universities

Annual Report and Accounts

31 July 2025

Charity Registration Number
801726

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Reference and administrative information

Executive Committee	Professor Claire Ozanne (Chair) from 24 June 2025 Professor Jackie Dunne (Chair) to 24 June 2025 Professor Julie Mennell (Vice-Chair) to 24 June 2025 Professor Symeon Dagkas (Vice-Chair) from 24 June 2025 Professor Anthony McClaran to 24 June 2025 Professor Sarah Greer Professor Claire Taylor from 24 June 2025 Reverend Nigel Genders from 24 June 2025 Paul Barber, Director of Catholic Education Service Sarah Shreeve Education Advisor, Church of England from 1 September 2024
Registered/Principal office	University of Cumbria Fusehill Street Carlisle CA1 2HH
Charity registration number	801726
Independent examiner	Sophie Graham BAcc(Hons), FCA, DChA Sterling House Wavell Drive Rosehill Carlisle CA1 2SA
Bankers	NatWest Bank High Street Lincoln LN2 1AZ
Solicitors	Lee Bolton Monier-Williams 1 The Sanctuary Westminster London SW1P 3JT

Executive Committee report Year to 31 July 2025

The Executive Committee presents the report and accounts of the Cathedrals Group of Universities for the year ended 31 July 2025. In March 2025, the Cathedrals Group agreed to amend its constitution to provide for an independent investigation of the accounts as provided by the Charity Commission. Accordingly, these accounts have been subject to an independent investigation by Saint and Co, auditors appointed by the Trustees in 2023.

The accounts have been prepared in accordance with the accounting policies set out on pages 11-13 of the attached accounts and the requirements of Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102).

The Council has adopted an abbreviated Executive Committee report as it qualifies as a small charity.

Governance, structure, and management

Constitution

The Council is governed by a constitution agreed by the Charity Commission, and formally adopted a new constitution on 23 September 2023, amendments in respect of the latter having previously agreed by the Commission. The Council is also a registered charity (charity registration number 801726).

Organisation

The policy and general management of the affairs of the Council is directed by the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee consists of the Chair, one Vice-Chair and three Vice Chancellors elected by the Members representing the range of Members. The Director of the Catholic Education Service and the Chief Education Officer of the National Society of Church of England are entitled to attend or to appoint representatives.

Representation

Membership of the Council is open to the designated Vice-Chancellor of each University in full membership. One nominee from each of the Catholic Education Service, the National Society (of the Church of England), and the Methodist Church in Britain are entitled to attend. Associate membership may be granted to such bodies as are willing and able to subscribe to the principal aims and activities of the Council.

The Members elect the Chair of the Executive Committee and Council to serve for a period of two years or such longer period as the Members may determine.

The members of the Executive Committee are also the trustees of the Council for the purposes of charity law. They are listed on page 1 and have all served in office throughout the year and to the date of this report except where stated.

Key management personnel

The key management personnel of the charity in charge of directing and controlling, running, and operating the charity on a day-to-day basis comprise the members of the Executive Committee.

No member of the Executive Committee receives any remuneration from the charity in respect of their duties.

Executive Committee report Year to 31 July 2025

Governance, structure and management (continued)

Statement of responsibilities of the Executive Committee

The Executive Committee is responsible for preparing the annual report and accounts in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

The law applicable to charities in England and Wales requires the Executive Committee, as the trustees of the Council (the “charity”), to prepare accounts for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charity at the year end and of its income and expenditure for the period. In preparing the accounts, the members of the Executive Committee are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- observe the methods and principles in Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable to the United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102);
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- state whether applicable United Kingdom accounting standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the accounts; and
- prepare the accounts on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in operation.

The Executive Committee is responsible for keeping proper accounting records which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charity and enable them to ensure that the accounts comply with the Charities Act 2011, the Charity (Accounts and Reports) Regulations and the provisions of the charity’s constitution. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charity and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

When setting the objectives and planning the work of the Council for the year and its future activities, members of the Executive Committee have considered the Charity Commission general guidance on public benefit

Executive Committee report Year to 31 July 2025

Governance, structure, and management (continued)

Risk management

The Executive Committee has assessed the major risks to which the Council is exposed, in particular those relate to the operations and finances of the Council and are satisfied that systems are in place to mitigate exposure to the major risks.

As a membership organisation whose income is primarily subscriptions, the major risk facing the Council is the loss of members. The financial consequences of this are mitigated in two respects: the low level of fixed costs with most expenditure being more discretionary spend; and the level of reserves carried to allow activity to be transitioned to a smaller membership base.

Objectives and activities

Overview

The principal objectives of the Council are to advance and develop higher education in the Church Universities, Universities with Church Foundations and other Universities admitted into membership of the Cathedrals Group and to support the Churches' continuing role in higher education.

In support of these objectives several meetings were held during the year on both a face-to-face basis and online. The Council meetings were held on 17 September 2024, 26 November 2024, 21 March 2025 and in person at the AGM and Council meeting on 24 June 2025 at Church House London. Executive meetings were held online on 18 October 2024, 19 February 2025 and 5 June 2025 with liaison in respect of key decisions between meetings as required.

Personnel

Professor Jackie Dunne (Vice-Chancellor of Birmingham Newman University) and Professor Julie Mennell (Vice-Chancellor of the University of Cumbria) served as Chair and Vice-Chair respectively in 2024/2025. Their terms of office ended at the June 2025 AGM and both chose not to stand again. The three-year term of office as an Executive member of Professor Anthony McClaran (Vice-Chancellor of St Mary's University) came to an end at the 2025 AGM and he also chose not to stand again. In addition, Professor Claire Ozanne (Vice-Chancellor of Liverpool Hope University) and Professor Sarah Greer (Vice-Chancellor of the University of Winchester) both served on the Executive in 2024/2025. Sarah Shreeve joined the Executive and Council as a representative of the National Society of the Church of England on 1 September 2024.

Following a nomination process, Professor Claire Ozanne was elected as Chair and Professor Symeon Dagkas, (Vice-Chancellor of the University of Chichester) was elected as Vice-Chair with two-year terms of office commencing on 24 June 2025. Professor Sarah Greer continued her term of office as an Executive member in 2025/2026. In addition, Professor Claire Taylor (Vice-Chancellor of Plymouth Marjon University) was elected to the Executive for a three-year term of office commencing on 24 June 2025 and Reverend Nigel Genders advised that he would represent the National Society on the Executive during Sarah Shreeve's maternity leave.

Julie Thompson, Executive Assistant from Professor Julie Mennell's office, provided administrative support to the Cathedrals Group during the year with the University of Cumbria's Finance Department supporting the management of the Cathedrals Group accounts in 2024/25. The Executive further agreed that the role of Pam Tatlow as Policy Adviser to the Cathedrals Group should be continued on a part-time consultancy basis during the 2024/2025 academic and financial year.

Executive Committee report Year to 31 July 2025

Executive Officer

The Executive and Council agreed that a part-time secondment opportunity for an Executive Officer should be offered to staff in those Cathedrals Group Universities willing to host such a secondment. Accordingly, a job description which combined the work of administrative support, business management and the policy consultant was agreed and a recruitment process commenced in May 2025. Amy Dyche, a member of staff from Lincoln Bishop University, was appointed to this secondment with a start date of 1 September 2025.

Infrastructure

The Executive has considered financial statements provided on a regular basis by the University of Cumbria's Finance team. Members were consulted on an increase in subscriptions, the latter having been frozen for 2 years. As a result, a 3% increase in subscriptions for the 2025/2026 financial year was agreed with subscriptions calculated on a banding basis related to institutional income. The Executive recommended a budget for the 2025/2026 year which was adopted by the June 2025 Annual General Meeting. This included provision for the funding of the secondment of the Executive Officer and a Choirs Festival in 2026 with the proviso that the latter might be funded from reserves and was dependent on a Member University being willing to host the same.

Sub-Committees

The Cathedrals Group's Sub-Committees continued to be pro-active in 2024/2025.

Education Sub-Committee

The Education Sub-Committee was chaired by Dr Jane Chambers, Head of the School of Education at St Mary's University, Twickenham. The Vice-Chair, Sue Cronin, stepped down in October when the Deputy Dean and Director of Initial Teacher Education at the University of Roehampton, Matthew Sossick, took over as Vice-Chair and then Acting Chair in April 2025. The Sub-Committee held four meetings which included consideration of recruitment, the revised mentoring framework, Ofsted consultations (with a submission made to the latter), Intensive Teaching and Practice requirements (ITaPs) and the DfE's Curriculum Review (to which a submission was also made). The Sub-Committee received presentations from Matthew Sossick on 'Trainee Teachers as carers', Andrea Shepherd from Ofsted and Professor Miles Berry from the University of Roehampton on 'Generative AI and beginning teachers' and at its final meeting of the year considered DfE expectations in terms of student placements and Ofsted requirements relating to partnerships and reaccreditation of ITT providers. The Sub-Committee has continued to provide a useful forum for the exchange of information and good practice and has helped contribute to the impact of the teacher education departments of Cathedrals Group Universities.

Research and Enterprise Sub-Committee

Professor Emile Bojesen (University of Winchester), stood down as Chair of the Sub-Committee after its first meeting of the year, to work with GuidHE on their research agenda. Professor Alex Nunn, Dean of Research at Leeds Trinity University took over as Chair of the Sub-Committee thereafter. The Sub-Committee met three times providing an opportunity for Members to share institutional updates and expertise, the impact of institutional res-structuring, information on Research Management Systems and consider responses and preparations for the Research Excellence Framework (REF) including Units of Assessment and staff contracts. In addition, the Sub-Committee discussed the potential for a Research Development bid relating to shared services.

Networks focusing on Knowledge Exchange and Doctoral Schools have continued to meet in the 2024/2025 academic year thus also enhancing the research and knowledge exchange activities in Member universities.

Executive Committee report Year to 31 July 2025

Governance, structure and management (continued)

Policy and Activity

The Cathedrals Group has been active in considering the impact of government policy, including the Secretary of State's decision that tuition fees in England could be increased by inflation from the 2025/2026 academic year, the funding and regulatory environment and Home Office policies in respect of international students.

Professor Sir Les Ebdon from the Free Churches Group spoke at the September 2024 Council when it was agreed that the Cathedrals and Free Churches Groups shared much in common in respect of values, commitments to social justice and support for students but also had similar concerns in respect of institutional autonomy and the encroachment on the latter of the regulatory framework. Claire Watson from Eversheds gave a presentation to the November 2024 Council on the implications of Martyn's Law (the Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Act 2025). Susan Lapworth, Chief Executive of the Office of Students spoke at the March 2025 Council and answered Members' questions. Separate discussions were also held with OfS on new regulations related to Freedom of Speech (effective from 1 August 2025).

In view of the introduction from 1 August 2025 of the OfS E6 regulation relating to harassment and sexual misconduct, Council agreed that a Working Group of staff responsible for working on the implementation of this new condition of registration should be established. This Group met on several occasions and proved useful in exchanging and sharing information as well as exploring options for training packages for staff and students.

The June AGM and Council heard from Lucy Rigler, Deputy Director of Skills England who outlined the likely focus of the latter, Caroline Waterfield, Director of Development and Workforce, NHS Confederation, who spoke about changes in NHS funding and their potential implications for higher education health professional and medical education programmes and from Mark Corver (formerly CEO of DataHE) who provided a presentation on admission trends and suggested how universities might respond to the latter.

As part of its business agenda, the Cathedrals Group Council has considered shared services, the transformation agenda and the challenges facing all universities in terms of the unit of resource, pensions, the bureaucracy and costs associated with a complex regulatory environment and the significant challenges facing students for whom the real value of maintenance loans and support has declined significantly. To reflect the concerns of the Group, the Chair issued a statement in advance of the Spring Statement calling on the Government to address these issues. A statement was also issued expressing concerns at the government's decision to withdraw Level 7 Degree Apprenticeship funding from apprentices over 19 years of age while a blog from the Policy Adviser focused on educational poverty and was published by the Higher Education Policy Institute (Hepi) in July. Following the publication of Home Office proposals relating to international students, the Chair also wrote to the Rt Hon Baroness Smith, HE and Skills Minister, outlining the potential impact of the latter.

The Cathedrals Group responded with a submission in July to the House of Commons Education Select Committee's Inquiry 'Higher Education Funding: threat of insolvency and international students'.

Cathedrals Group Universities have continued to support students with hardship funds (while noting that the demand for the latter often outstrips institutional resources), develop new courses and respond to the demand from employers for degree apprenticeships. In line with its stated ethos, the Group remains committed to widening participation, social justice and ensuring that higher education is accessible to all whatever their age or background. As such, its universities make a significant impact upon the lives of individuals, communities and the economies of the regions in which they are located.

Executive Committee report Year to 31 July 2025

Financial review

Total income amounted to £59,500 (2023/2024 – £70,000), which related entirely to membership subscriptions totalling £59,500 (2023/2024 – £70,000). Total expenditure amounted to £54,836 (2023/2024 – £64,698).

The net movement in funds was a surplus of £4,664 (2023/2024 – surplus of £5,302). The total net assets at the year end were £148,198 (2023/2024 – £143,534).

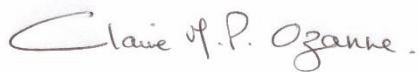
Reserves policy

Sufficient free reserves are maintained to enable the Council to meet any unexpected demands for its services and to finance projects undertaken at short notice, broadly defined as equivalent to an average year's expenditure. Should its reserves be insufficient, additional resources would be provided by the universities and colleges that are members of the Council. At the balance sheet date, the free reserves were £148,198 (2023/2024 – £143,534) and so in excess of this policy. It is anticipated that the surplus will be used to fund future projects.

Future plans

The Cathedrals Group plan to continue to support the advancement of public education in its universities in 2025/2026.

Signed on behalf of the Executive Committee on

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Claire P. Ozanne". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'C'.

Professor Claire Ozanne

Chair

Independent auditor's report 31 July 2025

Independent examiner's report to the Executive Committee The Cathedrals Group of Universities

I report to the trustees on my examination of the financial statements of The Cathedrals Group of Universities (the Charity) for the year ended 31 July 2025.

Responsibilities and basis of report

As the trustees of the trust you are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011.

I report in respect of my examination of the trust's financial statements carried out under section 145 of the Charities Act 2011. In carrying out my examination I have followed the Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Charities Act 2011.

Independent examiner's statement

Your attention is drawn to the fact the charity has prepared financial statements in accordance with "Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and the Republic of Ireland (FRS 102)"(as amended) in preference to the Accounting and reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice issued on 1 April 2005 which is referred to in the extant regulations but has now been withdrawn.

I have completed my examination. I confirm that no matters have come to my attention in connection with the examination giving me cause to believe that in any material respect:

- 1 accounting records were not kept in respect of the trust as required by section 130 of the Charities Act 2011.
- 2 the financial statements do not accord with those records; or
- 3 the financial statements do not comply with the applicable requirements concerning the form and content of accounts set out in the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 other than any requirement that the accounts give a true and fair view which is not a matter considered as part of an independent examination.

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in this report in order to enable a proper understanding of the financial statements to be reached.

Sophie Graham BAcc(Hons), FCA, DChA



Sterling House

Wavell Drive

Rosehill

Carlisle

CA1 2SA

Date: 5 December 2025.

Statement of financial activities Year to 31 July 2025

	Notes	Unrestricted funds	
		2025 £	2024 £
Income from			
Charitable activities			
Advancement of public education in Church universities and colleges	1	59,500	70,000
Total income		<u>59,500</u>	<u>70,000</u>
Expenditure on			
Charitable activities			
Advancement of public education in Church universities and colleges	2	54,836	64,698
Total expenditure		<u>54,836</u>	<u>64,698</u>
Net income and net movement in funds		4,664	5,302
Reconciliation of funds			
Balances brought forward at 1 August		143,534	138,232
Balances carried forward at 31 July		<u>148,198</u>	<u>143,534</u>

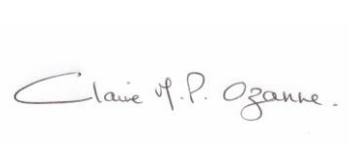
There is no difference between the net movement in funds stated above, and the historical cost equivalent.

All of the charity's activities derived from continuing operations during the above two financial periods.

Balance sheet 31 July 2025

	Notes	2025 £	2024 £
Current assets			
Debtors	5	336	0
Cash at bank and in hand		150,672	147,416
		<u>151,008</u>	<u>147,415</u>
Liabilities			
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	6	(2,810)	(3,882)
Net current assets /total net assets		<u>148,198</u>	<u>143,534</u>
The funds of the charity:			
Unrestricted income funds			
General fund		148,198	143,534
Total funds		<u>148,198</u>	<u>143,534</u>

Approved by the Executive Committee
and signed on its behalf by:



Professor Claire Ozanne
Chair

Approved on:

Principal accounting policies 31 July 2025

The principal accounting policies adopted, judgements and key sources of estimation uncertainty in the preparation of the accounts are laid out below.

Basis of preparation

These accounts have been prepared for the year to 31 July 2025.

The accounts have been prepared under the historical cost convention with items recognised at cost or transaction value unless otherwise stated in the relevant accounting policies below or the notes to these accounts.

The accounts have been prepared in accordance with Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (Charities SORP FRS 102), the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) and the Charities Act 2011.

The accounts have departed from the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2008 only to the extent required to provide a true and fair view. This departure has involved following the Statement of Recommended Practice for charities applying FRS 102 rather than the version of the Statement of Recommended Practice which is referred to in the Regulations but which has since been withdrawn.

The charity constitutes a public benefit entity as defined by FRS 102. The charity is a registered charity in England and Wales and is unincorporated.

The accounts are presented in sterling and are rounded to the nearest pound.

Assessment of going concern

The trustees have assessed whether the use of the going concern assumption is appropriate in preparing these accounts. The trustees have made this assessment in respect to a period of one year from the date of approval of these accounts.

The trustees of the charity have concluded that there are no material uncertainties related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the ability of the charity to continue as a going concern. The trustees are of the opinion that the charity will have sufficient resources to meet its liabilities as they fall due.

Income recognition

Income is recognised in the period in which the charity has entitlement to the income, the amount of income can be measured reliably, and it is probable that the income will be received.

Income comprises donations, membership subscriptions and bank interest.

Donations are recognised when the charity has confirmation of both the amount and settlement date. In the event of donations pledged but not received, the amount is accrued for where the receipt is considered probable. In the event that a donation is subject to conditions that require a level of performance before the charity is entitled to the funds, the income is deferred and not recognised until either those conditions are fully met, or the fulfilment of those conditions is wholly within the control of the charity and it is probable that those conditions will be fulfilled in the reporting period.

Principal accounting policies 31 July 2025

Income recognition (continued)

Membership subscriptions are calculated on an institutional basis, and by reference to student numbers, plus a flat rate, and are accounted for in the period to which they relate. Subscription rates are set annually.

Expenditure recognition

Liabilities are recognised as expenditure as soon as there is a legal or constructive obligation committing the charity to make a payment to a third party, it is probable that a transfer of economic benefits will be required in settlement and the amount of the obligation can be measured reliably.

Expenditure on the advancement of public education in Church universities and colleges includes such expenditure as:

- ◆ Accommodation, staff support and office expenses
- ◆ Conferences and meetings
- ◆ Consultancy
- ◆ Support costs including governance costs

All expenditure is accounted for on an accruals basis and is recognised when there is a legal and constructive obligation to make a payment and includes any attributable VAT which cannot be recovered.

Cash flow statement

The accounts do not include a cash flow statement because the charity, as a small reporting entity, is exempt from the requirement to prepare such a statement under the Charities SORP (FRS 102) Update Bulletin 1.

Debtors

Debtors are recognised at their settlement amount, less any provision for non-recoverability. Prepayments are valued at the amount prepaid.

Cash at bank and in hand

Cash at bank and in hand represents such accounts and instruments that are available on demand or have a maturity of less than three months from the date of acquisition.

Creditors and provisions

Creditors and provisions are recognised when there is an obligation at the balance sheet date as a result of a past event, it is probable that a transfer of economic benefit will be required in settlement, and the amount of the settlement can be estimated reliably. Creditors and provisions are recognised at the amount the charity anticipates it will pay to settle the debt.

Funds structure

Unrestricted funds comprise those funds which the Executive Committee are free to use in accordance with the charitable objects of the Council.

Principal accounting policies 31 July 2025

Accounting estimates and judgements

In the application of the charity's accounting policies, the Executive Committee are required to make judgements, estimates and assumptions about the carrying amount of assets and liabilities that are not readily apparent from other sources. The estimates and associated assumptions are based on historical experience and other factors that are considered to be relevant. Actual results may differ from these estimates.

The estimates and underlying assumptions are reviewed on an ongoing basis. Revisions to accounting estimates are recognised in the period in which the estimate is revised where the revision affects only that period, or in the period of the revision and future periods where the revision affects both current and future periods.

The Executive Committee consider there were no significant judgements made in preparing the financial statements and that there are no key sources of estimation uncertainty.

Notes to the accounts 31 July 2025

1 Charitable activities

	2025 £	2024 £
Advancement of public education in Church universities and colleges		
Membership subscriptions	59,500	70,000
	<u>59,500</u>	<u>70,000</u>

2 Cost of charitable activities

	2025 £	2024 £
Advancement of public education in Church universities and colleges		
Accommodation, staff support and office expenses	35,504	41,745
Choir Festival Contribution	0	9,958
Conferences and meetings	5,466	5,879
Website & Brand Development	13,026	4,416
Auditor's remuneration	840	2,700
	<u>54,836</u>	<u>64,698</u>

3 Taxation

The Cathedrals Group of Universities (operating as The Cathedrals Group) is a registered charity and therefore is not liable to taxation on income or gains derived from its charitable activities, as it falls within the various exemptions available to registered charities.

4 Executive Committee remuneration, expenses and transactions with Members

The members of the Executive Committee consider that they comprise the key management personnel of the charity in charge of directing and controlling, running and operating the charity on a day to day basis.

No member of the Executive Committee, or any persons connected with them, received any remuneration from the Council during the year (2023/2024 – £nil). No expenses were reimbursed to any members of the Executive Committee during the year (2023/2024 – £nil). All travel and subsistence expenses associated with the business of the Executive Committee are met by the members' institutions.

Most of the members of the Executive Committee are employed by universities who are Members of the charity. Membership fees to these organisations are charged on an arm's length basis. Some of these organisations also provide administrative and other services to the charity. During the year to 31 July 2025, £16,500 was incurred for administration costs, which was incurred by University of Cumbria (2023/2024 – £16,000).

Notes to the accounts 31 July 2025

5 Debtors

	2025 £	2024 £
Other debtors and prepayments	336	0
	<u>336</u>	<u>0</u>

6 Creditors: amounts falling due within one year

	2025 £	2024 £
Accruals	2,810	3,882
Creditor	0	0
	<u>2,810</u>	<u>3,882</u>

7 Related party transactions

Other than the transactions disclosed in note 4, there are no further related party transactions to disclose.