University of the
West of England
BRISTOL

ACADEMIC BOARD

Minutes of a meeting of Academic Board held on Wednesday 31 October 2012.

Present:	Jenny Ames, Gaynor Attwood, Paul Catley, Andrea Cheshire, John Clarke, Magdalena Cole, Olena Doran, Manuel Frutos-Perez, Trevor Goodhew, Paul Gough (Chair), James Holland, Jane Harrington, Lisa Harrison, Lyle Hopkins, Oliver Kirby, James Longhurst, Julie Mcleod, Patrick Nolan, Colin Offler, Paul Olomolaiye, Peter Rawlings, Catherine Rex, John Rushforth, Bruce Senior, Stephen Waite.
Apologies:	Martin Boddy, Alex Gilkison, Selena Gray, Philip Jones, Helen Langton, Glenn Lyons, Jo Midgley, Paul Morgan, Emmanuel Okon, Matthew Partington, Olly Reid, Ron Ritchie, Jackie Rogers, Kathryn Ross, Rosie Scott-Ward, Fiona Tolmie, Steven West
In Attendance:	Rachel Cowie (Secretary); Beryl Furey-King (Clerk) Tracey Horton, Emma Brown, Rob Stroud.

AB12.10.1   **MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING**
Paper AB12/10/1 was received

Academic Board approved the minutes of the meeting of 13 June 2012.

AB12.10.2   **MATTERS ARISING**

AB12.10.2.1   ITS shutdown calendar - *Minute AB12.6.3.1. refers*
The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Resources, Planning and Infrastructure) confirmed that discussions were still on-going around Shutdown weekends. The discussions were around whether the university should invest in more extensive fall-back provisions, which could enable more systems to be available during maintenance weekends. The downside to this being that it might result in the use of a very standard product only during those times.

ACTION: The Deputy Vice Chancellor to report to a further meeting the result of the discussions with ITS around the necessity of Shutdown weekends

AB12.10.2.2   Academic calendar - *Minute AB12.6.3.3 refers*
It was reported that a working group to discuss the academic calendar had met twice to agree a calendar for 2013-14 onwards. ,. It was noted that the group had been discussing three key models including ways in which the University could be more supportive of the student experience.

The output from the group would be sent out for further consultation and would come back to the Board in December. It was also noted that the Trade Unions (via HR representation) and Student Union (SU) had been involved in the discussions. The proposals had been drafted through until 2015/16 and the intention was for the calendar to then be rolled forward from year to year. An SU representative asked if the calendar also included the timing of postgraduate dissertations. It was agreed that the issue of Part Time postgraduate students having sufficient time to complete dissertations should be fed into the Academic Calendar Group via the VP Education.

AB12.10.3   **REPORT OF CHAIR'S ACTION SINCE PREVIOUS MEETING**
Paper AB12/10/02 was received

Chair's actions which had taken place since the previous meeting were noted. Item 4 on the list was still outstanding as it was declined.

> **ACTION: FET ASQC to put a clearly stated proposal to Academic Board for the requested change in regulations**

AB12.10.4   **VICE CHANCELLOR'S REPORT**
Paper AB12/10/03 was received and noted
*This paper noted as **Confidential** – change of status of the paper to be noted at the next meeting.*

AB12.10.4.1   Recruitment Position
There was still a question over how the Government would allocate future student numbers, but it was noted that this information should be available by January once HEFCE had received their grant letter. The Director of Corporate and Academic Services (CAS) gave an overview of registered student numbers to date.

AB12.10.4.2   Strategy Development
Contributions to the development were being made from Board members and more information would be available at the next meeting.

AB12.10.4.3   University Alliance Chair Activities
Annex 3, page 21 refers.

AB12.10.4.4   President of Business West
Noted that the Vice Chancellor will be taking up the position of President of Business West with effect from January 2013.

AB12.10.4.5   Vice Chancellor's update
Annex 4, page 26 refers.

AB12.10.5   **ACADEMIC BOARD STRUCTURE/MEMBERSHIP**
Paper AB12/10/04 was received and noted

AB12.10.5.1   The Deputy Academic Registrar advised the paper was a summary of consultation which had taken place over the summer in order to rebalance core academic activities under Academic Board. This included the addition of the Academic Quality and Enhancement Committee (AQEC) and the Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee (RKE)

which now report directly to Academic Board. Various changes had also been made in the reporting lines of committees. Those Committees noted in dotted lines on the chart indicated that their current status was under review. The Participation, Community and Public Engagement Executive Committee was now disbanded with key elements of the terms of reference being moved to other committees, so the business was reporting elsewhere. An E-election system was to be introduced for the election of members to Committees and the Board would be advised of the details of this in due course.

AB12.10.5.2 Honorary Degrees Committee
It was noted that the membership of the Honorary Degrees Committee was not complete. Academic Board was asked nominate two members of the professoriate to take their place on this Committee. It was agreed that CAS would ask existing Professors for expressions of interest.

> **ACTION: CAS (Governance team) to e-mail existing Professors for expressions of interest for membership of the Honorary Degrees Committee**

AB12.10.6 **ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION**

AB12.10.6.1 **Improving the Student Experience**
Paper AB12/10/05

AB12.10.6.1.1 The Chair confirmed that this item was the focus of the business of Academic Board on this occasion. It was hoped that both the new and continuing student representatives would give feedback on their experience and that other members of the Board would provide some input, particularly from the Student/Governors Forum that had recently taken place. Those members who were newly arrived to the University were invited to offer their thoughts on how they perceived the students experience to be working. The Chair advised that the meeting was looking for tangible actions which could be taken rather than further discussions about planning activity and that this subject – and the resulting actions - would be brought back to the Board during the year.

AB12.10.6.1.2 The meeting received feedback from the Student/Governors Forum where the meeting was split up into different groups in order to facilitate discussions. It was evident that some students were happy with their experience of the university but others identified issues which came within three areas:

    i.   Registration and enrolment, especially for first years, was a main concern. Students were advised that the university had recognised the difficulties experienced and that the Executive Deans, the Director of Student & Partnership Services and the Director of Corporate and Academic Services had already met and were taking forward making the experience better in future years.

    ii. Returning students had advised that they experienced difficulties with timetabling and confirmed that they wanted a timetable for the next academic year with their results in June or July, so that they could look for work before they returned. It was suggested

that this was a good aspiration and the university should engage with this.

    iii.   Another key issue was that of attendance. The students seemed supportive of an attendance policy as they felt that students should enable and support each other. This would not be possible with low attendance, nor in a situation where students felt forced to be there. Any attendance policy could have an impact on outcomes which might be different across the faculties.

AB12.10.6.1.3   The Chair directed the meeting to the paper produced by the Dean of Students' Office entitled 'Student Surveys – perceptions of Good and Weak Practice' which was a reflection of the student voice coming back to the university. Especial attention was given to the Chart on page 43 which indicated pockets of student satisfaction and how this related to each faculty.

AB12.10.6.1.4   The work done by the Business Intelligence Team and the Dean of Students' Office to analyse the results of the NSS was highlighted and this had made the university better aware of some of the areas in which there was a need for step changes. A paper was sent to AQEC which indicated that the university had changed little from last year but that other institutions had raised their results and left UWE behind. Overall satisfaction was raised, but the responses fell within the 'mostly agree' to 'disagree' sections. The university needed to acknowledge that there were a good number of higher performing programmes but that step changes to our overall satisfaction were needed by looking at priority areas. Qualitative data showed that, if assessment feedback was put to one side, timetabling, management and academic support, were of concern. What was evident was the need for the university to get back to basics. That would mean providing proper learning environments and dealing with students in a positive manner in order to get to the teaching quality and student experience that we should be providing.

AB12.10.6.1.5   It was suggested that the university could become pre-occupied with providing robust methods for tracking student attendance instead of encouraging students to attend. A better aim would be to sort out timetabling issues as the present situation caused students to disengage. A better understanding of why students did not attend would be a better way to approach the issue. It was noted that some Departments had significant success by staff routinely reviewing attendance so that if a student did not attend for the second time a member of staff was allocated to find out what had happened. This then encouraged fellow students to take responsibility to find out what had happened to students who were not attending and this had a significant impact.

AB12.10.6.1.6   Postgraduate students felt that they did not get the same level of support, focus or attention as undergraduates. Their requirements were different and they needed additional understanding in order to manage their work commitments.

AB12.10.6.1.7   It was suggested that there was a need to reconnect people in terms of the experience of students and systems as these had a real impact. These were the areas which our competitors had improved in.

AB12.10.6.1.8 With regard to systems integration, it was suggested that it was important to understand how we had got where we are. In the past the university had tried to identify the best system that was available and then worried about connections and interconnections later. This had led us to a situation where we had a whole raft of systems which did not interconnect easily and this was a position that was difficult to sustain. In November a report would be received which would look at our key data and the processes we needed to maintain, making suggestions of what might be developed in the future. The cost could be significant and could move the university away from having systems designed to do exactly what we needed. It was also indicated that a wide range of different behaviours in the institution were having a wide impact and that the university might need to look at the amount of flexibility we are prepared to offer students. This could start from the proposition that a system delivers a timetable when students need it, but could mean that programmes could not alter after a certain point in the year and level of choice may have to change. The first step was to bring a set of policy changes through and when clear on the policy for timetabling, the institution should work on an integrated system to deliver it.

AB12.10.6.1.9 There was discussion around the provision of a Teaching and Learning Unit which would aid the spread of good interactions and practice between staff. The meeting was also asked to reflect on teaching observation as part of the probationary review of staff and providing mentors for both new and existing staff.

AB12.10.6.1.10 It was suggested that the institution had lost sight of its ambition in terms of how it worked and how it worked with the students. Approaches across the institution were being compartmentalised when the university should be using a more holistic approach to making those step changes. Action plans should be fed through from students and the institution should be focusing on the action, rather than the planning. The university should start seeing students as co-conspirators who work together to make things better. The Board was reminded that with a Quality Assurance Agency Review (QAA) within the next three years, the institution was already in the evidence period and student engagement and enhancement were key to the level of confidence the QAA would place in the institution.

AB12.10.6.1.11 The university had to be clear that 'we do what we say we do'. There were expectations set in the Prospectus and Student Charter but the evidence of weak practice was that the institution was not upholding the standards it had set itself. The university needed to bring staff experience and student experience together, shifting the culture, encouraging and celebrating good practice and challenging poor practice, with a sense of ownership for individuals.

Action: DVC (Resources, Planning and Infrastructure) and Director of CAS to bring a paper to December meeting around systems integration

Action: PVC, TLSE to bring discussion paper to the December meeting on attendance and engagement of students

Action: DVC, Academic to contact VP Education and the Students Union to discuss the implementation of student-led teaching awards up to postgraduate level

AB12.10.6.2   **Regulatory Review**
Paper AB 12/10/06 was received

AB12.10.6.2.1   The Academic Regulatory Framework Review Manager introduced a summary of the proposed key changes to the Academic Regulations. Meetings had taken place with the SU in order to get the student view on the proposed changes and a testing group, whose membership had been derived from the working groups, was to look through the proposals. There had also been consultation with ITS around any necessary systems developments.

AB12.10.6.2.2   Section A – Management of Student Assessment
The issue of introducing extensions for students with extenuating circumstances might be delayed until 2014-15 due to systems issues and a need to decide if this introduction was the best thing for students. Consideration was also needed to how extensions might work for partner institutions, and how the granting of an extension would be communicated to the appropriate staff and to the student record. Work was also required around the 'fit to sit' policy and the communication of the implications of this to students.

AB12.10.6.2.3   Section B – Awarding Credit
The suggested change to the threshold for condoned credit to be a % of the credit taken was welcomed by the Board.

AB12.10.6.2.4   Section C – Assessment Structure
With regard to the assessment structure:

   i.   The working groups had been looking at other institutions for examples of limiting the number of assessments within a module, so that the number of pieces of work related to the credit size of a module. It was noted that sub-elements were a problem with a number of modules where coursework, for example, was split into a number of sub-assignments.
   ii. There had also been consideration of allowing students to take failed tasks only, rather than imposing the resit of a complete component.
   iii. Mandatory attendance for all retakes was also a proposal, but as the university did not require attendance for the first sit, then this could change to a recommendation.
   iv. A return to allowing four sits at a module had been proposed as there was currently lots of activity in trying to re-establish this for particular students.
   v.   .
   vi. It was noted that PSRB requirements would have to be taken into account with regard to many of the suggested assessment

changes.

vii.   It was noted that any trailing of modules might cause funding issues for students and also interfere with the notion of progression which UK Border Agency Tier 4 students require.

AB12.10.6.2.5   Section E – Examining Boards
It was proposed that the confirmation of marks should be carried out prior to Field Boards so that the Board were free to discuss quality related issues, cohort performance etc.   This would include academic staff inputting marks directly into the Student Record through a suitable interface in order to avoid the current duplication of effort.   Award Boards would only be asked to look at students by exception, where discretion needed to be applied, although a clearer definition of discretion was also required.

AB12.10.6.2.6   Next steps:
Testing groups would continue and additional student feedback of the proposals would be sought.   Further staff consultation would then take place with firm proposals expected for the December meeting of Academic Board.   A representative of the SU suggested allowing resits so that students could achieve a better mark and it was agreed that this would be put to the testing groups.

AB12.10.6.2.7   It was acknowledged that any changes to the regulations needed to align with the proposed changes to the academic calendar and that an Equality Impact Assessment was required.   The meeting congratulated Tracey on the continued management of the revision of the regulations which was recognised as being a significant task.

AB12.10.6.3   **New Programmes**
Paper AB 12/10/07 was received

AB12.10.6.3.1   The Quality Management and Enhancement Framework (QMEF) was under review and the proposals included a slightly more robust, less onerous but more effective way of dealing with new programmes.   This would include input from externals at an early stage in the design of new programmes and at the approvals stage.   There would also be a role for ASQCs (Academic Standards and Quality Committee) in the final scrutiny of documentation and a review of the signing off of programme and module amendments so that not everything had to go to a Curriculum Approval Panel (CAP).

AB12.10.6.3.2   For new programmes in particular, marketing impact was seen as key and a business case would come forward from Marketing to support this. It was agreed that having this input up front should allow robust decisions to be made on the introduction of new curriculum.   A concern was noted over the removal of the Portfolio Development Group (PDG) from the process as it had been suggested by one Faculty Executive that this could stifle innovation.   It was hoped, however, that by bringing in Associate Deans (LTSE) and taking them through a process rather than holding a meeting, that the premise of PDG would be captured.   The Board were supportive of this, especially of marketing having more of an involvement on new programme decisions.   It was expected that this

would be a supportive process to programme innovation and would provide information to inform discussions.

AB12.10.6.3.3   CAPs were operating under the old system at the present time but it was hoped that the university could move to this revised process for January 2013. One issue that had been evident was the moving of CAP deadlines so that, for example, meetings had been agreeing new and revised programmes in September for September intakes. This had caused considerable work and confusion as, in some cases, it had been difficult to build the infrastructure to enable students to roll-in to active courses. It was agreed that flexibility was required in the timelines for approving new curricula, but that 80% of work had to fit within the normal timeframe in order to allow the flexibility with the remaining 20%, if it was required.

AB12.10.6.3.4   It was agreed that as CAPs had been in force since January a change to the system could cause confusion for staff. Information would therefore be made available to staff so that they were aware of what in the system was or was not the same. In addition, there was some concern over the workload involved in approving very minor changes.

AB12.10.6.3.5   Academic Board therefore approved the new procedures to curriculum design and approval subject to consideration of how very minor changes were dealt with. The Board further agreed that the PDG would be disbanded.

AB12.10.6.4   **Module Evaluations**
                    Paper AB 12/10/08 was received

AB12.10.6.4.1   The Director of Corporate and Academic Services introduced the paper relating to the gathering of student feedback on modules through an online survey in Blackboard. The aim was to strengthen the student voice and enable a consistent questionnaire across the university for a comparable view year on year. Currently there was no consistency of questions across the institution so no comparability in the identification of issues or good practice. The university was aware that the student experience at the module level was critical, but the way the university currently provide the feedback opportunity was varied. The proposal would make accessibility easier for students and staff with quantitative data available through Business Intelligence. It was noted that the SU was keen to make such feedback available to students at the point of making module choices and that this would help drive quality and enhancement from the module up. It should also enable issues to be picked up quickly and ensure that action is taken.

AB12.10.6.4.2   The Board was advised that consultation had occurred over the questions by with an AQEC sub-group using the various questions currently used by the Faculties as a starting point and also trying to align them to the NSS questions.

AB12.10.6.4.3   The meeting was supportive of the proposal although it was noted that student response rates could be a concern. A suggestion was made that the technology of Blackboard might allow the feedback on the modules to

be brought up to a programme site or that students might prefer to access the survey using mobile phone technology. A pilot would be taking place during November and the sub-group of AQEC was looking into communication with students and staff. It was noted that there was some slight concern from staff over how the data would be used.

AB12.10.6.5   **TEL Strategy**
Paper AB 12/10/09 was received

AB12.10.6.5.1   The Director, Education Innovation Centre (EIC) introduced the paper and advised that the intention of the strategy was to move the university forward and enhance the experience of all students and staff. The strategy should enable access to study at UWE and attempt to enhance the technology skills of students and staff. The strategy took forward some work by the PVC and Executive Dean, HLS and had been through consultation. It had been seen by the Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Executive (LTSEE) and AQEC and should still be appropriate to the revised university strategic plan.

AB12.10.6.5.2   The Board thanked the EIC Director for the enormous amount of work that had been undertaken to produce the TEL Strategy and acknowledged that 'normalising' the use of technology across the institution was a huge challenge. Some questions were raised over whether the strategy would achieve what the university needed and whether it would achieve this in a suitable timescale. It was suggested that there could be a greater emphasis on students being co-producers and partnerships. Also the issue of sufficient resources to carry out the strategy would have to be considered.

AB12.10.6.5.3   The Strategy was approved in principle although it was noted that some areas needed enhancing. The Strategy also needed to fit with the university strategy and revised Academic Strategy and subsequent implementation plans.

AB12.10.6.6   **Report from the Student's Union**
Paper tabled numbered AB 12/10/9b

AB12.10.6.6.1   It was noted that a Student Written Submission would be received each year from the Student's Union but this paper was an update based on student feedback gained through recent Student Representative Department Fora. It was acknowledged that there were 918 student representatives for this current academic year and that so far 50% of them had been fully trained. Issues identified through the various fora included:

i. A request for a university steer on induction. Statements of principle and basic contact information were required especially at Level 1. Level 2 and 3 students also asked for a planned induction that received proper planning and was not put in place at short notice.

ii. A review of registration processes as students felt they were being unsuccessfully moved from one process to another without achieving registration for the year. It was noted that the VP Education was already engaged with Corporate and Academic

Services over this issue.

iii. Timetabling of classes, although it was acknowledged that there was not a general student consensus over what was required to make a good timetable. The main issue was the timing of the dissemination of the timetable, which ideally for continuing students, would be at the end of the previous term. This would allow students to negotiate with employers over suitable arrangements to fit around their university timetable.

iv. Students would also like a clearer idea of how Personal Tutors could support them. The paper noted that the new Academic Personal Tutor scheme had been well received.

v. More guidance on note-taking in lectures and how that fitted with Blackboard content. There was also a feeling that Blackboard was not used to its fullest capabilities.

vi. SU representatives also suggested there was an issue with some sessions finishing early, by as much as 45 minutes in a two hour session.

AB12.10.6.6.2 The Board thanked the Manager: Representation and Community, for the work undertaken so far and confirmed that, although the university had moved to an Academic Personal Tutor system, those continuing students who wished to carry on with their Graduate Development Programme (GDP) would be resourced and supported to enable them to get their transcript at the end of their studies. It was also agreed that similar items from the SU would be put earlier in the agenda at future meetings, in order to enable full discussion.

AB12.10.7 **ITEMS TO NOTE**

AB12.10.7.1 **QAA Mid Cycle Review Report**
Paper AB12/10/10 was received and noted

The Chair outlined the Review Report, the new risk-based methodology and advised the Board that the VP Education, Olly Reid had been appointed a Student Reviewer with the QAA.

AB12.10.7.2 **Minutes of Academic Board Sub Committees**
Paper AB12/10/11 was received and noted

As the Minutes of the Board of Governors meeting were unconfirmed, it was noted that the status would remain confidential until they had been agreed.

AB12.10.8 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

The Chair thanked the members of the Board for their contributions to the meeting. It was suggested that as preparation for the Research Excellence Framework (REF) the next meeting should set aside some time to discuss the university's strategy as on 1st December 2012 a clear submission of intention had to be made to HEFCE.

AB12.10.9 **DATE OF FUTURE MEETINGS**
19 December 2012
13 March 2013

1 May 2013
26 June 2013

University of the West of England, BRISTOL

ACADEMIC BOARD

Meeting date: Wednesday 31 October 2012

ACTION SHEET FROM THE MEETING HELD 31 October 2012

Minute	Substance	Actioning Officer	Reporting Deadline
AB12.10.2.1	Report to the result of the discussions with ITS around the necessity of Shutdown weekends	DVC (Resources, Planning and Infrastructure)	19 Dec 2012
AB12.10.3.1	Put a clearly stated proposal to Academic Board for the requested change in regulations	FET ASQC	19 Dec 2012
AB12.10.5.2	Expressions of interest to Professors for the Honorary Degrees Committee to be gathered by CAS	Governance Team, CAS	30 Nov 2012
AB12.10.6.1.10	Paper to December meeting on systems integration	DVC (Resources, Planning and Infrastructure) and Director of CAS	19 Dec 2012
AB12.10.6.1.10	Discussion paper to the December meeting on attendance and engagement of students	PVC (TLSE)	19 Dec 2012
AB12.10.6.1.10	Discussions on the implementation of student-led teaching awards up to postgraduate level	DVC (Academic)	19 Dec 2012

University of the
West of England
BRISTOL

ACADEMIC BOARD

Meeting date: Wednesday 31 October 2012

*EXECUTIVE SUMMARY FOR BOARD OF GOVENORS

- None

*EXECUTIVE SUMMARY FOR AQEC

- Proposals for a new academic calendar would be circulated for consultation shortly

- The Board discussed ways to improve the student experience, which could result in an attendance/engagement policy; continued systems integration work; consideration of student-led teaching awards; reviewing the teaching observation policy

- Draft proposed regulatory changes were discussed

- New method for curriculum design and approval was approved

- Introduction of online module evaluation through Blackboard approved

- TEL Strategy approved

*It is the responsibility of the Committee Officer to ensure the Executive Summary is fed to the relevant committees.