



University of the
West of England

Confirmed

ACADEMIC BOARD

Minutes of a meeting of Academic Board held on 12 March 2014.

Present: Steve West (**Chair**), Elizabeth Apap-Bologna, Clayton Davies, John Deane, Paul Dowdall, Benjamin Drew, Megan Edmunds, Manuel Frutos-Peres, Sarah Green, Bernhard Gross, Jane Harrington, Catherine Hobbs, Lynne Lawrance, James Lee, Mandy Lee, Katie McFadden, Julie McLeod, Chris Moore, Steve Neill, Paul Olomolaiye, Richard Parnaby, Adam Pinfold, Darren Reynolds, Gerry Rice, Jackie Rogers, Charlie Roper, Jeanette Sakel, Tommy Van-Steen, Aniko Varadi, Harry Winser.

Apologies: Martin Boddy, Alex Gilkison, John Rushforth, John Dovey, Dylan Jones-Evans, Nicholas O'Regan, Glenn Parry, Rachel Sales, Rosie Scott-Ward, Tracy Willis,

In Attendance: Jodie Anstee, Rachel Cowie (**Clerk**); Jo Midgley, Helen Millican (**Deputy Clerk**), Cathy Rex.

Observers: Janet Miller, Declan Stones, Thomas Renhard

MINUTES

Introduction

AB 14.3.1 The meeting started with a screening of the new promotional film which was part of a campaign to share and celebrate the work and the brand of the University. In response to feedback that the film did not mention UWE, or Bristol, until the end it was explained that it would always be shown within a UWE context. A shorter 30 second version was also being produced. Members reacted positively to the film's production values and the input of UWE students in its making.

Minutes of the meeting held on 18 December 2103

AB 14.3.2 The minutes of the meeting were confirmed as an accurate record.

Membership

AB 14.3.3 New Faculty Board representatives from the Faculty of Business and Law and the Faculty of Health and Applied Sciences were welcomed.

Matters arising

AB 14.3.4 The Quality Dash Board would provide a cross-University oversight of performance to inform faculty, department and programme level developments and would feed into the annual report to the Board of Governors from Academic Board. An update was provided in the Vice-Chancellor's report (minute 14.3.10 below refers).

Students' Union Report

- AB 14.3.5 Paper AB 14/03/2 was received from the Students' Union. It updated the Board on the second Student Rep Committee (SRC) of the 13/14 academic year. SRC had again invited a member of the University to discuss a particular topic. On this occasion the Director of Widening Participation & Schools & Colleges Partnerships, Fay Croft, was invited to discuss widening participation strategy providing an opportunity for SRC members to feedback from a diverse range of perspectives. The Students' Union Report also provided feedback from Student Reps and SU Forums on the following matters: Blackboard, technology enhanced learning (TEL), student led Faculty newsletters, sustainability, the possibility of a joint Student Rep Forum with University of Bristol, academic feedback, module evaluation questionnaires, the student rep and student led teaching awards, and the 'fit to sit' policy.
- AB 14.3.6 The Students' Union was thanked for a productive and useful report and the value of working with the SRC and SU Forums was acknowledged. Members commented that they welcomed the positive feedback in the report highlighting what was going well. With regard to the teaching awards, Members reported that the awards were highly regarded by teaching staff. The quality and consistency of Blackboard and TEL was a recurring theme of feedback from students and work was ongoing to produce minimum expectations/standards to improve the student experience. Members were pleased to see that module evaluation questionnaires were generally well received by students. There was discussion about the recommendation to review the timing of the questionnaires, with agreement that earlier information gathering could result in more timely feedback to students. It was acknowledged, however, that the challenges of providing timely and meaningful feedback on students' module evaluations would vary from module to module and required continual reflection to keep improving.
- AB 14.3.7 The paper made a number of other recommendations which would be taken forward. The Students' Union was asked to be mindful of the University governance structure so that the right recommendation could be picked up by the right University Committee.
- AB 14.3.8 With regard to the recommendation to delay implementation of 'fit to sit', it was explained that the policy had resulted from a review of extenuating circumstances regulations and procedures (which the Office of Independent Adjudicators had highlighted were not working well) and a desire to change the way students were supported during assessments. Academic Board stressed that the fit to sit policy should not be viewed in isolation but as part of a package of measures designed to improve the support available to students and help them manage assessments when things went wrong. For example: introducing regulations and procedures to allow for extensions which were not currently available to undergraduate and postgraduate taught students; and re-thinking re-sit assessment regulations. Academic Board was of the view that the extenuating circumstances process was not always the best way to help students and was looking for assessment regulations which included a number of different mechanisms to offer support. The Students' Union expressed concern about consultation with students about the policy but Academic Board was satisfied that SRC had been consulted in November 2012 about 'fit to sit' as part of a package of academic regulations at that time. The Students' Union was also seeking assurance about the implications of the policy which it felt had not been properly thought through. It was concerned about how students may be affected by the fit to sit policy if a problem arose subsequent to assessment.

- AB 14.3.9 The Acting Director of Academic Services offered to work through a number of case studies with the Students' Union for assurance that the policy was fit for purpose. The Chair advised the Students' Union to take up this offer and to put together a final paper detailing concerns which the Board could consider. Academic Board agreed that it would not delay the implementation of the Policy, which had provided the University with the opportunity to review a whole range of assessment matters to improve the student experience. Details of the range of the changes which were planned to assessment regulations were requested to provide the Board with the context within which the Fit to Sit Policy was being introduced. This, together with the worked-through case studies, would form the basis of a discussion at the next Academic Board.

Vice-Chancellor's Report

- AB 14.3.10 Paper AB 14/03/3 was received from the Vice-Chancellor which detailed: confirmation of HEFCE's funding allocation for 2014/15; Faculty and Professional Services planning; the Quality Dashboard of management information to support decision making; contingency planning should the UCU trade union action result in withholding marks; and a summary of Vice-Chancellor's Executive business.
- AB 14.3.11 There was discussion about the University's Estates strategy and how to capitalise on building activity. Further discussion would be taken forward outside the meeting on how to communicate about the changes to the campuses to positively raise the University's public profile; and how to capitalise on the educational value of the activity.

Feedback from Faculty Boards

- AB 14.3.12 Executive summaries were received (paper AB 13/03/4) from recent Faculty Board meetings and the matters below were discussed:
- AB 14.3.13 Most of the meeting of the Faculty of Arts and Cultural Industries, Creative Industries and Education Board was devoted to a detailed discussion around the UWE 2020 Strategy work stream "research with impact". There was also discussion about the redevelopment programme (which was subsequently approved).
- AB 14.3.14 The Faculty of Business and Law had discussed sustainability, and reported that the Students' Union report had been well received.
- AB 14.3.15 The Faculty of Environment and Technology had discussed how to make the 'bottom up' approach work well, particularly in relation to agenda setting. Also discussed was the FET MOOC (massive on-line open course). The next Faculty Board would consider how the Faculty might respond to the un-capping of numbers.
- AB 14.3.16 The Faculty of Health and Applied Sciences Faculty Board was Chaired by a non-executive member of the Faculty. A common topic for discussion was the workload model. Faculty Board highlighted the urgent need for an electronic research governance system. Human Resources had given a presentation on stress management and promotion opportunities. Opportunities for professional experience, outside the traditional work placement were also discussed.
- AB 14.3.17 Summaries of the Hartpury College Associate Faculty Board would be provided in future.

External Examiners

- AB 14.3.18 The Board split into four groups for discussion about how to improve current external

examining arrangements. Topics included those listed below and the ideas and feedback would inform a future proposal.

- AB 14.3.19 Themes: the new Field Board process worked well; a two tier approach should remain but be re-articulated; the need for Chief External Examiners to have the programme context; there was no need to externally examine Level 1; expectations of external examiners, including what they view, should be clarified by improving advice and guidance; Field and Chief External Examiners should be provided with links to programme and module specifications; partner assessment dates should be brought in line with UWE's as much as possible; the use of norm referencing; holding Award Boards by exception; how to end contracts.

UWE Charter

- AB 14.3.20 Paper AB14/03/5 was received presenting a new UWE Charter. It was developed by the UWE Charter Steering Group established jointly with the Students' Union and Chaired by Professor Julie McLeod. It has been widely consulted upon and considered by Academic Quality and Enhancement Committee (AQEC) in October 2013 and at Students' Union Council in February 2014. The Charter focused solely on all students registered for a UWE award (not pre-entry) studying directly at UWE and was relevant to students on all programmes including research. It could be readily adapted for students at partner institutions. It aimed to be real and meaningful, short and sharp; a live dynamic document to actively engage staff and students which would be available digitally.

- AB 14.3.21 Academic Board approved the content of the Charter with the following recommendations: that a link to the IT welcome page should be included rather than the one in the document; and that enthusiastic engagement should come from both staff and students. Concerns about the legality of the document were dismissed in the context of entities such as this but there was recognition that the University should be held to the matters it stated it would undertake, which in theory could include legal action.

Hartpury College transitional planning

- AB 14.3.22 An update was received from the Vice-Principal Hartpury College and the Acting Director of Academic Services (paper AB 14/03/6) on Hartpury's bid for Teaching Degree Awarding Powers (TDAP). If successful, the first applicants for Hartpury degrees would be in September 2018 (within the 2017/18 recruitment cycle). UWE awards would still be running at Hartpury until at least 2021. Transitional plans were currently being worked through which included Hartpury:

- administering their own admissions applications, which began in 13/14;
- registering with the SLC
- taking responsibility for communications with new and returning students.

- AB 14.3.23 In addition:
- Students would be rolled into ISIS from Hartpury's admissions system and there would be changes to registration which were still being worked on.
 - Returning international students on Tier 4 registration would remain under UWE sponsorship; new international Tier 4 students would come under Hartpury sponsorship from September 2014.
 - Students on UWE awards would continue to access all UWE library resources and support was being provided to the College about library provision during the transition to a stand alone institution.
 - Responsibility for external reporting would be gradually passed to Hartpury and once TDAP had been successfully achieved Hartpury would maintain its own National Student Survey (NSS) and relationship with the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA).
 - All UWE awards would continue to be approved in line with the University Quality Management and Enhancement Framework (QMEF): Programme Approval and would be held on ISIS (or its replacement). Transitional arrangements for moving the student record would begin in due course.
- AB 14.3.24 Key aspects still to consider were:
- how to manage the relationship should TDAP be unsuccessful or delayed;
 - consequences of any delays in introducing new student records systems at UWE or Hartpury;
 - any impacts on the top-slice currently received by UWE;
 - variance to Academic Regulations for Hartpury.
- AB 14.3.25 Next steps would be agreed by the Vice-Chancellor and College Principal following discussions with the Vice-Principal, from Hartpury and the Acting Director of Academic Services on 19 March 2014.

Smoke Free Policy

- AB 14.3.26 The Acting Director of Academic Services introduced the new policy on behalf of Judy Orme, Chair of the Healthy University Group (paper AB 14/03/7). The policy aimed to provide students, staff and visitors with a smoke free environment at UWE. Regular complaints about passive smoking had triggered the initiative. Research, focus groups, surveys and consultation with staff, students and trade unions, together with a Smoke free Spaces pilot project at Bower Ashton, had been used to gather feedback. Issues raised had been addressed and incorporated into the Policy and FAQs available at www.uwe.ac.uk/smokefree.
- AB 14.3.27 Academic Board approved the policy with the following recommendation: that a smoke free campus map is produced to show where people can and cannot smoke; and with the caveat that staff and students would need to work responsibly together to enforce the policy.

New Year 2015 Honours List

- AB 14.3.28 Members were asked to let the Vice-Chancellor and Acting Director of Academic Services know of any nominations they wished to make to recognise the achievements of staff. The deadline for nominations was early April so any suggestions should be forwarded by the end of March 2014.

Academic Board Chair's action

- AB 14.3.29 The following was noted: that the University had lifted the moratorium on the partnership with Management Development Institute Singapore (MDIS); that ISIS

could be amended to enable the location of a partner institution and/or other details relating to the partnership to be added to the Certificate of Credit. At the same time a statement would be added to the Certificate of Award parchment to the effect that it should be read in conjunction with the UWE Certificate of Credit. This latter change would apply to all UWE students irrespective of location of study.

Minutes of Committees of Academic Board

- AB 14.3.30 The following minutes were received and noted: Academic Quality and Enhancement Committee (AQEC) from the meeting on 4 December 2013; Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee (RKE) from the meeting on 30 October 2013.

Fields of Study

- AB 14.3.31 It was noted that, as a result of the move from five to four academic departments in the Faculty of Environment and Technology (paper AB 13/06/20b referred), the Planning and Architecture Field of Study had been closed; and the Construction and Property Field of Study had been renamed Architecture and the Built Environment.

Other business

- AB 14.3.32 A concern was raised about all new PhD theses now being part of the electronic repository in the Library. There was concern this could potentially cause difficulties with some publishers if being held in this way was judged to be pre-publication. Academic Board referred the matter to the Graduate School Committee for consideration and asked for a report, endorsed by Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee, about a proposed approach to the issue in the context of other institution's practice and publishers expectations.

ACADEMIC BOARD ACTION SHEET FROM THE MEETING HELD ON 12 MARCH 2014

Minute	Substance	Actioning Officer	Timescale
AB 14.3.9	List of concerns about the Fitness to Study Policy for consideration at the next meeting	Students' Union	By 12 noon Friday 9 May 2014 for next meeting
AB 14.3.9	Details of the range of changes being proposed to Assessment Regulations to give the context for the Fitness to Study Policy	Julie McLeod and Rachel Cowie	By 12 noon Friday 9 May 2014 for next meeting
AB 14.3.9	Worked through case studies about the implementation of the Fitness to Study Policy	Rachel Cowie, Students' Union and appropriate staff	By 12 noon Friday 9 May 2014 for next meeting
AB 14.3.32	New PhD theses as part of the electronic repository in the Library and potential difficulties with some publishers. Graduate School Committee to consider and report back to Academic Board with Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee endorsement	Neil Willey	By 12 noon Friday 9 May 2014 for next meeting