

ACADEMIC BOARD

Minutes of a meeting of Academic Board held on 2 October 2013.

Present: Steve West, Vice Chancellor (**Chair**); Paul Gough, DVC Academic (Vice Chair); Julie McLeod, PVC (LTSE); Alex Gilkson, PVC/Exec Dean (ACE); Paul Olomolayie, PVC/Exec Dean (FET); Helen Langton, PVC/Exec Dean (HAS); Fiona Tolmie (representing PVC/Exec Dean (FBL); John Deane, Vice-Principal Associate Faculty; James Lee, HoD (ACE); Paul Dowdall, HoD (FBL); Sarah Green, HoD (HAS); Richard Parnaby (representative Professor); Bernhard Gross, Vice Chair Faculty Board, (ACE); Darren Reynolds (representative Professor); Jeanette Sakel (representative L&T Fellow); Rachel Sales (representative L&T Fellow); Manuel Frutos-Perez (representative L&T Fellow); Lynne Lawrence (representative L&T Fellow); Adam Pinfold (representative Professional Services); Charlie Roper, President, UWE Students' Union; Megan Edmunds, Vice-President Education, UWE Students' Union.

In Attendance: Rachel Cowie, Acting Director CAS (**Clerk**); Helen Millican, nominee CAS (**Deputy Clerk**).

Apologies: Martin Boddy, PVC (RKE); Jane Harrington, PVC/Exec Dean (FBL); Catherine Hobbs, HoD (FET), Rosie Scott-Ward (representative Associate Faculty Board); Jo Midgley, Director SPS; Richard Parnaby, (representative Professor), Cathy Rex, Director Library Services; Tracy Willis, Director IT.

Observer: Jim Costello, UCU; Jodie Anstee, Vice-Chancellor's Office.

MINUTES

TERMS OF REFERENCE AND MEMBERSHIP

Paper AB13/10/01 was received

AB13.10.1 The Terms of Reference were introduced and membership explained. There was a balance of executive and non-executive members, some of the latter being elected representatives. Service Directors were in attendance to advise on matters as appropriate. Academic Board was a deliberative body with a close functional relationship with the Board of Governors where the Vice-Chancellor and the President of Students' Union had overlapping membership. Academic Board members were accountable to the decisions made by the Board and were expected to attend all meetings (membership attendance will be monitored by the Board of Governors). Normally, in the

event of non-attendance, an alternative would not be allowed. Under exceptional circumstances the Vice-Chancellor could agree a deputy, particularly to ensure that there was full Faculty representation at Executive level.

- AB13.10.2** The merits, or otherwise, of Board meetings being conducted virtually was discussed. The majority of members favoured face-to-face meetings, but it was acknowledged that virtual meetings by video/web conferencing could be a useful way for task and finish groups of Academic Board to conduct business.

MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

Paper AB13/10/02 was received

- AB13.10.3** The minutes of the meeting held on 23 June 2013 were approved as an accurate record, subject to the following amendments: Minute 13.06.26 to read "The Board felt overwhelmingly that UWE should not have a religious observance policy as presented"; Minute 13.06.04 to read "Potentially around 300 staff would be submitting and approximately 1000 publications would be considered".

MATTERS ARISING

Religious Observance Policy

Minute AB13.06.26 refers

- AB13.10.4** The Board had not been satisfied with the assessment part of the Policy as presented in June. It was agreed that a re-worked draft would be presented during the 2013/14 academic year.

Action: Acting Director CAS and PVC LTSE

Report on matters approved by Chair's action

Minute AB13.06.25 refers;

Paper AB13/10/03 was received

- AB13.10.5** The report detailed the actions signed off by the Vice Chancellor in his role as Chair of Academic Board between June 2013 and September 2013. It was noted that Helsinki Psychotherapy Institute, Finland now had a signed agreement and that Academic Board would be asked to closely monitor this activity as it was the first time delivery had taken place in a foreign language.

Systems integration

Minute AB13.06.07 refers

- AB13.10.6** The DVC Resources would update the Board in writing.

Action: DVC Resources

STUDENTS' UNION REPORT

Update on matters from the Students' Union

- AB13.10.7** It was reported that registration had gone well, despite a power outage which had caused slight technical issues with overnight feeds. Student course reps were currently being recruited. They would be supported by training which was also available to academic tutors to help them understand the role of the student rep. The Vice-Chancellor stressed how important the student rep system was and how influential academic staff could be in encouraging students to put themselves forward for election. How to encourage participation where the number of student reps was down was discussed. It was agreed that a joint communication from the SU President to new students and the Vice-Chancellor to programme managers would be beneficial. It was suggested that this might be done via Youtube in future. Concern was expressed that the inevitable information overload from being at a new institution meant that the message did not always get through to new students, however, the need to appoint reps as soon as possible was vital in order to engage students in the training programme. It was agreed that it might be useful to consider the earlier recruitment of reps from previous years. The Acting Director of CAS agreed to convene a small group with the SU to look at ways of encouraging participation.

Action: SU President, Vice-Chancellor and Acting Director CAS

Annual Report

Paper AB13/10/04 was received

- AB13.10.8** The report provided an overview of student feedback received in 2012/13, documenting where real progress had been made and suggesting areas for further development. The PVC (LTSE) thanked the Union for a clear report and commented that it was reassuring to see work that had been undertaken, around, for example, Academic Personal Tutors, was taking effect. Likewise, it was reassuring to see progress in the areas of feedback, Blackboard, organisation/management/communication and placements although there was still work to do. She highlighted that the group established to look at the start of the year had been particularly successful. The Board was pleased to note that a number of the issues highlighted by the Students' Union were already in hand, for example, a group had been set up, chaired by the PVC (LTSE) to look at timetabling issues. The UWESU VP Education would be invited to participate.
- AB13.10.9** The report highlighted that the word count policy had caused confusion. It was confirmed that the policy was being revised to make it clearer for students and staff. It would be brought to the Academic Quality and Enhancement Committee in due course. It was acknowledged that this was a good example of where the University had listened and taken action to address students' concerns. Demonstrating that the University was listening

to students' concerns and either taking action about them, or explaining why matters could not be addressed, was a current priority for the University with the introduction of the "Full Circle Campaign" being led by the Acting Director of CAS (discussed further below).

- AB13.10.10** Regarding feedback about placements where students reported feeling unsupported and unprepared at the start, it was stressed that technology enhanced learning could help with this.
- AB13.10.11** With regard to feedback on students' work it was stressed that, although it was hoped that the 20 day working day turnaround for feedback on students' coursework would bring demonstrable change in student satisfaction, it was high quality student feedback which staff should be working to provide. In addition to this, it was reported that the Nursing and Midwifery Department had moved from academic to student led feedback by asking students what they wanted from their feedback mid-module. Engaging students in this way to be reflective about their feedback led to discussion about how practice oriented learning might affect feedback on students' work. It was recognised that many parts of the institution were still very traditional in terms of their assessment techniques.

VICE CHANCELLOR'S REPORT

Paper AB13/10/05 was received

- AB13.10.12** The Board noted the report which provided an update to Academic Board on issues considered by the Executive not covered elsewhere on the agenda. It provided a brief update on: The Times and the Sunday Times Good University Guide - Performance 2014, where the University was making steady progress towards its ambition to be in a top 50 position; the University for the Real World marketing campaign which gave prospective students the opportunity to engage emotionally with student stories and other engaging context to bring the UWE Bristol experience to life; initial recruitment figures which suggested recruitment targets had been met and average tariff on entry was likely to increase, but which also highlighted our exposure to clearing; student number controls 2014-15 and beyond published by HEFCE.

STUDENT FEEDBACK 2012/13

Paper AB13/10/06 was received

- AB13.10.13** The paper by the Acting Director of CAS highlighted key issues and areas of concern from both the National Student Survey (NSS), the UWE Student

Experience Survey (SES) and the feedback gathered from Student Reps/Staff Forums (SRSFs) and set out some actions already underway and the proposed methodology for monitoring progress over the year.

AB13.10.14 Five priority programmes were highlighted for action in 2013/14 based on NSS data: electrical and electronic engineering; civil engineering; building; nursing; and psychology. Within the 7 themes of the NSS, those subject areas which had fallen below the national bottom quartile were also identified. This year, for the first time, CAS had undertaken some cohort analysis and identified areas of good practice and those in need of further development within two themes, namely assessment/feedback and organisation/management. The themes had been identified by triangulating responses from the NSS, the SES and feedback received throughout the year from the Student Representative/Staff Forums (SRSF). Departments were to be encouraged to reflect on these themes in their programme monitoring action plans.

AB13.10.15 In terms of monitoring progress, it was recommended and agreed that University Academic Quality and Enhancement Committee (AQEC) be given delegated authority to closely monitor the 5 subject areas that require action as a priority; and that Faculty Academic Standards and Quality Committees (ASQC) be given delegated responsibility for monitoring those subject areas which the paper identified had fallen below the national bottom quartile in the 7 themes considered by the NSS. ASQCs should also ensure that Departments were taking forward action regarding the areas of good practice/need for further development identified above. It was the intention that actions and outcomes could be built into the annual monitoring cycle more holistically to determine progress and highlight work which is having an impact. It was acknowledged, however, that communication around these issues could be simplified so that 'at a glance' everyone in the University could see the priorities for action.

AB13.10.16 Actions already underway identified in the paper included a 'full circle' campaign in partnership with the Students' Union to highlight actions taken in response to student feedback supported by a UWE App; new Programme Management Committees looking further at bunched assessment deadlines; an audit of hidden costs to students; a new working group to look at timetabling and examination schedules; expansion of the assessment sub-group of AQEC looking at issues with marking criteria so that it looks at wider assessment practices; a new Survey Enhancement Project to take a strategic oversight of cross University initiatives; continuation of the Start Of The Year (SOTY) Board in 2013/14.

UWE STRATEGY 2020: TOWARDS PRACTICE ORIENTED LEARNING *Paper AB13/10/07 was received*

AB13.10.17 The paper put forward for discussion a UWE interpretation of 'practice oriented and professionally recognised' education as part of the University's 2020 strategic ambition; and a range of examples of activities and learning environments to enable the strategy's implementation. A presentation by

the PVC (LTSE) provided further ‘food for thought’. Following the presentation members of the Board worked in three groups to further discuss what it means to be a University “internationally and nationally recognised for a practice-oriented and professionally-recognised portfolio which contributes to an outstanding learning experience and generates excellent graduate employability opportunities and outcomes for all students.” (cf [*UWE Bristol Strategy 2020*](#))

AB13.10.18 Feedback from the groups highlighted that whilst the actions, enablers and outcomes were clear there was no indication of which were priorities. It was also felt that the action plan would benefit by being mapped to the four priorities of the 2020 strategy. Following their discussions, each group was asked to feedback one key priority for action/further discussion. These were: how to empower programme teams at programme level to engage with this; staff development; and by whom are we recognised? The last point prompted discussion about striving to be ‘best in class’ in some subject areas.

AB13.10.19 The Board approved the action plan as presented and recognised that it was the start of a long journey and set of discussions which would be monitored through the Vice-Chancellor’s Executive and Academic Board as appropriate. It was noted that an Equality Impact Assessment would be initiated as the action plan started.

Action: PVC LTSE, DVC (Academic) and Director of Transformation

ACADEMIC RISK: MANAGING AND MONITORING

Paper AB13/10/08 was received

AB13.10.20 The Vice-Chancellor’s Executive had invited Academic Board to consider and advise on the management of academic risks identified within the Corporate Risk Register, including ways in which the risks could be monitored. The Corporate Risk Register would be made available to members for reference in due course.

AB13.10.21 The Board was asked for thoughts on the risk areas identified, namely: quality; technology enhanced learning (TEL); external partnerships (academic and business); research and knowledge exchange (RKE); undergraduate recruitment; and postgraduate recruitment. It was noted that there were no key actions for further control identified for TEL and that the hazards and obstacles which can create risk in this area would be further identified as the ‘living document’ grew. There was discussion about RKE and the University’s definition of ‘Research with Impact’ compared to that used in the Research Excellence Framework (REF). No further risks were identified that could present a barrier to the University’s ability to meet its strategic objectives.

- AB13.10.22** In terms of monitoring risk, the Board agreed to endorse using a number of key quality indicators, in the form of a 'quality dashboard', to identify movement in risk and as a means to keep Academic Board updated on and engaged with the risks identified.

ANNUAL REPORT TO THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS

Paper AB13/10/09 was received

- AB13.10.23** The paper highlighted a number of areas of work undertaken by Academic Board and its sub-committees during the academic year and future developments. The paper asserted the belief that Academic Board, in light of changes made to the way it had worked and its relationship with other committees, had provided it with the ability to effectively discharge its responsibilities. Academic Board approved the report for submission to the Board of Governors.

AB13.10.24 DATE OF FUTURE MEETINGS

18 December 2013

12 March 2014

21 May 2014

25 June 2014

AB Minutes: H Millican

Draft Unconfirmed: 9/10/13

Unconfirmed: 9/10/13

Confirmed:

ACADEMIC BOARD**ACTION SHEET FROM THE MEETING HELD ON 2 OCTOBER 2013**

Minute	Substance	Actioning Officer	Reporting\other deadline
AB13.10.04	Religious Observance Policy, re-work draft to be presented	Acting Director CAS and PVC LTSE	No later than 12 noon Friday 13 June 2014
AB13.10.06	Systems integration - written update to be circulated	DVC Resources and Deputy Clerk	End of October 2013
AB13.10.7	Encourage participation in the student rep system	SU President, VC and Acting Director of CAS	By 12 March 2014 Board meeting