



University of the
West of England

CONFIRMED

ACADEMIC BOARD

Minutes of the meeting of the Academic Board Committee held on Thursday 5th October 2006

Present: Sir H Newby (Chair), Professor M Boddy, J Bradley, N Clough, Professor R Cuthbert, Professor J Duffield, Dr K Foreman, Professor C Fudge, Professor P Gough, S Grive, A Habib, T Harrison, W Jones, M Keppel-Palmer, N Khurana, Dr S Newby, C Rex, Dr D Reynolds, Professor R Ritchie, Dr J Rogers, J Rushforth, B Senior, E Smith

Apologies: Professor A Bensted Professor G Channon, Professor S Hagen, B Hawkins, S West

In attendance: R Bond (representing Professor S Hagen), C Croudace, D Francombe, K Hicks, Professor S Neill, M Wheeler

AB06.10.1 WELCOME

The Vice Chancellor welcomed members to the first meeting of the newly constituted Academic Board.

AB06.10.2 MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 14TH JUNE 2006

The Board approved the minutes of the meeting of 14th June 2006, subject to the following amendments:

AB.06.3.21 – delete “a review of staff development at all levels”

AB.06.3.23 – add the words “for purpose” at the end of the statement

AB.06.3.33 – replace “know” with “known” in the last sentence

AB.06.3.36 – replace “research institutes and centres” with “institutes and research centres”

AB.06.3.46 – replace “Affiliated Institutions of Faculties” with “Affiliated Institutions *or* Faculties”

AB.06.3.58 – delete the word “the” from the phrase “... fund *the* a number of the initiatives ...”

AB.06.3.60 – delete the word “the” from the last line

AB.06.3.67 – replace “Graduate School Committee” with “Graduate *Studies* Committee”.

Action: Clerk

AB06.10.3 VICE CHANCELLOR’S REPORT

10.3.1 The Vice Chancellor prefaced his report with a statement of appreciation for the collegial and positive way in which all colleagues across the institution had responded to the recent reviews and developments, resulting in considerable progress

being made with many issues since the June 2006 Academic Board meeting.

- 10.3.2 The Committee agreed to approve the Vice Chancellor's proposals for the Chairs of Academic Board Committees and Sub-Committees as follows:

Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee – Dr Sheila Newby
Graduate Studies Committee – Professor John Duffield
Programme Approvals Scrutiny Committee – Professor Geoff Channon
Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee – Sir Howard Newby

Action: Secretary

- 10.3.3 The Committee agreed to approve the Vice Chancellor's proposed nominations for representatives of Academic Board on Policy and Resources Committee as follows: Professors Geoff Channon, John Duffield and Paul Gough.

Action: Secretary

- 10.3.4 The Vice Chancellor confirmed that nominations for representatives of Academic Board on the Professorial and Honorary Degrees, Joint Diversity and Joint Student Affairs Committees would be agreed following the meeting and reported to the next meeting.

Action: Secretary

- 10.3.5 The Vice Chancellor reported that the final admissions figures for Home and EU Undergraduate HEFCE-funded students was likely to be between 300 and 350 lower than in 2005; UWE remained within the tolerance band for HEFCE funding, but these figures confirmed the need to address known recruitment and retention issues.

AB06.10.4

ACADEMIC BOARD GOVERNANCE

Paper AB06/10/2 was received.

- 10.4.1 The Committee noted that the terms of reference and membership for the Committee were as previously circulated. The Committee noted that references to the Student Union should be replaced with Student Representative Council.

Action: Clerk

Paper AB06/10/2a was received.

- 10.4.2 Members were invited to submit to the Academic Registrar nominations for co-options to Academic Board, bearing in mind current activities and priorities.

Action: all members

Paper AB06/10/3 was received.

- 10.4.3 The Committee noted the current faculty board structures, which would be transitional for 2006/2007 pending new faculty realignments. Members were invited to submit any updated versions to the Academic Registrar.

Action: Deans

- 10.4.4 Following some discussion about the reporting mechanism for

faculty Ethics Sub Committees, it was agreed that consultation should take place at Deans and Heads of Service, to include Professor Robin Means, Chair of the Research Ethics Committee.

Action: Deans and Heads of Service

Tabled paper AB06/0/4 was received.

10.4.5 The Committee noted the timetable of meetings for Board of Governors and Academic Board and their joint sub-committees for 2006/2007. The Board also noted the draft agendas for the November and December 2006 meetings of Academic Board. The Vice Chancellor noted that changes in the coming year in the reporting timetable for HEFCE would undoubtedly impact on the timing of the Board's business. The Vice Chancellor thanked the Academic Registrar and the Clerk to the Governors for producing these documents, which aimed to improve the flow of business between committees.

10.4.6 Detailed plans of the business for the remainder of 2006/2007 would be submitted to the December 2006 Academic Board meeting, including draft agendas.

Action: Academic Registrar and Clerk to the Governors

10.4.7 Chairs and secretaries of Academic Board Committees were reminded that annual reports for 2005/2006 must be submitted to the Academic Registrar for the November 2006 Academic Board meeting.

Action: Chairs and secretaries of Sub Committees

10.4.8 The Academic Registrar reported that there would be ongoing evaluation of the new arrangements for governance and invited feedback from members throughout the year.

AB06.10.5

FACULTY RESTRUCTURING

Tabled paper AB/06/10/5 was received - an updated version of the paper circulated with the agenda, taking account of subsequent discussions.

10.5.1 The Committee noted that the appointment of senior staff to new Faculty sub-structures would take place in April 2007, with colleagues expected to take up office from 1st August 2007.

10.5.2 During discussions with colleagues in the proposed new faculty groupings, the following generic issues had emerged:

(a) the need for urgent consideration to be given to the relationship between faculties, Institutes and other bodies. While proposals for Institutes would be invited from faculties, the UMG would need to take funding streams into account. A paper for further discussion of this issue would be submitted to a future Academic Board meeting.

Action: UMG

(b) the restructuring of faculties needed to be goal-oriented, with clear objectives to capture the anticipated benefits, eg new learning and teaching programmes, research activity and Knowledge Exchange activity.

- (c) existing brands in faculties/Schools would need to be protected.

10.5.3 During the debate, three key issues were identified:

- (a) the need to consider the risk to the area of Environmental Science and Sustainability which might result from the new faculty realignment; there were serious concerns that the current success in this area might be diluted or lost under the proposed grouping; it was agreed that the mechanisms to guarantee inter-disciplinary working across faculties in many areas must be robust and facilitative
- (b) arrangements for Joint Honours students must be carefully addressed in faculty realignments; the Assistant Vice Chancellor confirmed that the Student Experience Programme would address this issue
- (c) the issue of student representation in the new structures must be given early consideration; the SRC was currently experiencing difficulties in obtaining names of student representatives, which would impact on elections to many University committees.

Action: Academic Registrar and SRC (c)

10.5.4 The Board agreed to endorse the proposals to progress the new groupings.

Action: Chair/Secretary to report to PRC

AB06.10.6

PROFESSIONAL SERVICES RESTRUCTURING

Paper AB/06/10/6 was received.

10.6.1 The Deputy Vice Chancellor confirmed that the review of the professional services would seek to release resources, and to improve service and quality. He also confirmed that the most important part of the restructuring exercise would inevitably be the exploration of the relationship between the services, the centre and the faculties. The proposal was for a line and support organisation, with central staff providing more dedicated support to a faculty, who would be professionally supported from the centre, with standard setting, training and coordination. The proposal was welcomed by Heads of Service and by the Dean of Students, who anticipated greater uniformity of service to students.

10.6.2 The Board agreed to endorse the approach to the review.

AB06.10.7

PLANNING ROUND

Paper AB/06/10/7 was received.

10.7.1 The Vice Chancellor reported that Andrea Cheshire, the new Director of Planning, had produced the template for this year's planning, which would build on the submissions from last year and focus on UWE's priority areas. Existing Faculty and Service structures would be used to gather information and data; this would be linked through combined planning meetings and cross faculty discussions in preparing submissions.

10.7.2 A series of institutional KPIs had been developed to inform planning and performance management. These would need to be translated by Faculties and Services into appropriate,

meaningful and relevant KPIs, There would need to be wide ownership of KPIs; a clear training and development need was identified to underpin robust performance management throughout the institution.

- 10.7.3 There was some concern about the volume and timing of work to be undertaken in faculties in the immediate future (planning, data capture and analysis, RAE), and that with the new faculty board meetings timetable, it had not been possible to consult colleagues as much as in the past over planning documents.
- 10.7.4 It was agreed that there would need to be discussions in clusters over planning priorities and that new Executive Deans will need to be consulted when appointed.
- 10.7.5 It was agreed that the institutional KPI “introduce compulsory attendance at lectures and seminars” should be discussed at the first meeting of the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee, with a report being made to the November meeting of Academic Board.

Action: LTA Committee

AB06.10.8

UWE INSTITUTES

Paper AB/06/10/8 was received.

- 10.8.1 The Deputy Vice Chancellor confirmed that a number of suggestions for Institutes had already been made and that more might emerge during the planning round. There would be a transparent prioritisation process, to ensure a focus for investment and to provide the basis for a bid to HEFCE for SDF funding. The sponsors of initial proposals approved in principle by the UMG would be required to produce a robust business plan.
- 10.8.2 The Board agreed to endorse the criteria for prioritisation of bids and the process for development.

AB06.10.9

STUDENT EXPERIENCE PROGRAMME

Papers AB06/10/9, AB06/10/10 and the tabled paper “UWE website and metrics” were received.

The Vice Chancellor welcomed Professor Steve Neill to the meeting for this item.

- 10.9.1 The Dean of Students reminded the Board of the three priorities identified for development through the Student Experience Programme:
- (a) Welcome Weekend – feedback collected during and since Welcome Weekend indicated that this had been very successful. The event would be developed for 2007 entrants.
 - (b) Employability project – a considerable amount of work had been undertaken already and the project continued
 - (c) Round Table – the pilot approach to learning skills development at level 1 in 2006/2007 would be evaluated throughout the academic year and would inform the development of proposals for the establishment of a common University-wide approach to

student achievement and personal development for full implementation in 2007/2008. Academic Board would receive regular updates on the evaluation and would be invited to discuss and approve a common framework to be part of all undergraduate teaching programmes from 2007.

10.9.2 The Board welcomed this innovative approach to learning skills development, at the same time highlighting issues which would need to be borne in mind for full implementation: staffing and accommodation resources; timetabling; validation; attendance; assessment load; the question of credit rating as an additional/replacement module on a programme, particularly on some professional programmes.

10.9.3 The Board agreed to endorse the piloting of the Round Table approach

10.9.4 The Dean of Students presented the report on the outcomes of the 2006 NSS, which ranked UWE as 88= out of 129 (average score) and 68= out of 93 on the THES basis. The Vice Chancellor confirmed that faculties were expected to address the issues highlighted by the survey. He confirmed that there was evidence of good practice across the institution and pointed particularly to the overall achievement of FAS in the survey.

10.9.5 Members identified the following issues which would need to be addressed urgently:

- (a) timetabling, particularly the effect of timetabling changes on students
- (b) building on Welcome Weekend's success
- (c) ensuring clarity of information for students at Welcome Weekend to ensure they knew what to do on Welcome Monday
- (d) improved management information systems (including earlier access to UWEOnline)
- (e) assessment and feedback
- (f) improvements in the dissemination of good practice
- (g) a better understanding by staff of the NSS process
- (h) improved TQi presence

10.9.6 The Vice Chancellor thanked the Dean of Students and all involved with the Student Experience Programme for the work undertaken to date. The SEP would become a standing item on the Academic Board agenda.

Action: Clerk

10.9.7 The Dean of Students would submit to the November meeting of Academic Board a final Action Plan to take forward issues from the NSS Survey.

Action: Dean of Students

10.9.8 The Head of Marketing and Communication presented a brief analysis of the UWE website that indicated the need for investment, with a view to improving external access, particularly for potential applicants. A corporate visual identity was required,

with a common framework, allowing flexibility at the next level. It was agreed that a Working Group should be convened, with a view to making firm proposals for a way forward to Academic Board at its December 2006 meeting.

Action: Head of Marketing and Communication

AB06.10.10 **REPORT FROM FACULTY BOARDS**

10.10.1 The Board received brief oral reports from Deans.

10.10.2 All Faculty Boards had discussed the Planning Round, their annual Monitoring and Evaluation reports, and had received a presentation by a member of the Student Experience Programme team.

10.10.3 Issues discussed at individual Faculty Board meetings included:

- (a) the increase in numbers of postgraduate research students to 28 (AMD)
- (b) the faculty Widening Participation Action Plan; the appointment of the Executive Dean (BBS)
- (c) Faculty Diversity Action Plan; the creation of (a) Freshers Reloaded (one day in week 2 of October) and (b) Freshers Reloaded² - this was welcomed as a good development to build on Welcome Weekend (FAS)

10.10.4 In answer to a query from the Vice Chancellor, Deans reported that discussions had been lively, despite concerns about the amount of business dealt with at the first meeting of the year.

10.10.5 Reports were not available from CEMS and HLSS, or from Hartpury College whose Faculty Board was to meet on 25th October 2006.

The Committee noted that in future faculty boards would submit formal written reports to the Board.

Action: Secretaries to FB/Clerk

AB06.10.11 **STUDENT MATTERS**

The SRC President reported on the following activities and priorities:

- (a) the SRC was very supportive of the Round Table development
- (b) there was an attempt to raise the awareness of students of all societies and activities available, including the opportunity to become a student representative
- (c) there would be a National Demonstration led by the NUS on 29th October 2006 to try to dissuade the Government from raising the cap on tuition fees after 2009
- (d) there was to be a referendum in October 2006 for UWESU, to determine whether to remain affiliated to the NUS
- (e) there would be elections for Site Chairs etc in October 2006
- (f) there were concerns about the need to improve communication between the SRC and the faculties about the recruitment of student representative coordinators
- (g) transport to and from UWE needed urgent attention – the Deputy

Vice Chancellor confirmed that he was in talks with the First bus company and with Bristol University and would continue to campaign for improvements

- (h) plagiarism continued to be a major issue for students, particularly those from other cultures – concerns were expressed about anecdotal evidence that faculties were managing plagiarism in different ways, despite the approval by AQAC in 2005 of an agreed framework, including the requirement for faculty Plagiarism Advisers. It was agreed to refer the implementation and monitoring of the University policy to the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee at its October 2006 meeting.

Action: Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee

10.10.12

RECORDING STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

The Academic Registrar reported that a consultation paper had been received from the Burgess Group (Measuring and Recording Student Achievement), the key focus of which was the claim that the honours classification system was no longer fit for purpose and putting forward a proposal for a Pass/Fail system supported by the Diploma Supplement and more detailed transcript. Board members would receive a synopsis of the consultation paper, the full version of which would be considered by the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee at its October 2006 meeting. Academic Board would receive the full response drafted by the LTAC.

Action: Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee

10.10.13

DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

2.00 pm, 15th November 2006 room 2Q56
2.00 pm, 20th December 2006 room 3D36
2.00 pm, 31st January 2007 room 3D36
2.00 pm, 14th March 2007, room 3D36
2.00 pm, 16th May 2007 room 3A22
2.00 pm, 13th June 2007 room 3A22
2.00 pm, 4th July 2007 room 3D36