

CONFIRMED

ACADEMIC BOARD

Minutes of the meeting of Academic Board held on Wednesday 10 June 2009

Present: J Rushforth (Chair), Professor J Arthurs, Professor A Bensted, J Bradley, P Catley, Professor G Channon, A Cheshire, M Frutos-Perez, J Fryer, T Goodhew, Professor P Gough, M Grey, S Grive, Professor S Hagen, T Harrison, D Hawes, A Mathieson, T McGoldrick, Dr N McKenzie, P Nolan, M Partington, D Passfield, K Phillips, J Thomas, P Williams

Apologies: Professor S West, D Allen, Professor M Boddy, P Dowdall, Professor J Duffield, A Echarte, Dr J Harrington, W Jones, Dr J Lanham, M Orme, C Rex, Professor R Ritchie

In attendance: H Jackson (Clerk); K Beeching and C Fletcher (for minute AB09/06/5); J Longhurst (for minutes AB09.06.6.7-AB09.06.8.3); A Rudd (for minutes AB09.06.6.2-AB09.06.6.6.2), S Yilmaz (for minute AB09.06.6.7)

AB09.06.1 MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 4 MARCH 2009

Paper AB09/3/1 was received.

The Board approved the minutes of the meeting of 4 March 2009.

AB09.06.2 VICE CHANCELLOR'S REPORT

Paper AB09/3/2 was noted.

AB09.06.3 CHOICES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Paper AB09/6/3 was noted as a confidential paper to members of the Board.

AB09.06.4 CALENDAR OF MEETINGS 2009-2010

Paper AB09/6/4 was noted.

AB09.06.5 THE FUTURE OF LANGUAGES

Paper AB09/6/5 was received.

AB09.06.5.1 The Academic Registrar reminded the Board that its role was to advise the Vice Chancellor prior to a consideration by the Board of Governors.

AB09.06.5.2 Assistant Vice-Chancellor Bensted introduced the report noting it was a précis of a much longer report. He informed the Board that the Vice Chancellor had invited a panel of senior staff to prepare a quantitative review to inform an earlier qualitative review undertaken by the Executive Dean of the SSH faculty. The panel comprised AVC Bensted, AVC Channon, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, the Director of Planning, the Director of RBI, the Deputy Director of Finance, the SSH Executive Dean and the Associate Dean (Academic) from BBS, supported by colleagues from HR and AIR. PBI had provided national market analysis and comparator data; AIR had provided information on

application trends and comparator data; Finance had modelled scenarios including the status quo and future trends; RBI had undertaken a research project to evaluate comparator institutions' responses to the downturn in applications and the general status of language provision in the university sector.

- AB09.06.5.3 AVC Bensted noted that the panel's starting position had been to preserve languages at UWE whilst recognising the need to operate within the available resource envelope. A very careful evaluation was undertaken which recognised the importance of modern foreign languages in a number of institutional activities. The panel had noted the strength of Linguistics in the recent RAE, the strength of the MA Translation programme and the emerging strength of the MA in Inter-Cultural Communication.
- AB09.06.5.4 The statistical data made available to the panel had demonstrated the effect of external factors including demographic changes, a distinct reduction in public sector funding and increased competition including from the FE sector. The panel had concluded that the financial position of the department was a serious one for the University despite efforts by the faculty to make efficiency gains. The total deficit was currently standing at over £900K. The panel recognised that the deficit in individual subject areas varied and this was taken into account in the development of its recommendations.
- AB09.06.5.5 AVC Bensted reported on the situation in respect of applications and provided detailed information about the percentage declines in applications in each of French, Spanish and Chinese at UWE and nationally. A total of 39 individuals had applied for languages for entry in 2009. Although there was evidence that the numbers of students undertaking languages at A-level was slightly increasing, when spread across the 76 institutional providers of modern foreign languages it was also evident that those same, mainly pre-92 institutions, were putting increasing pressure on their tariffs to recruit students who might have been more likely to come to UWE, particularly in French and Spanish. Chinese did offer a potential for hope given UWE's position as the monopoly provider in the South West and the small number of institutions offering Chinese in the sector.
- AB09.06.5.6 The panel's recommendation to the Vice Chancellor had therefore been to cease recruitment to programmes in 2009 and to proceed immediately with finding suitable alternatives to applicants currently in the process of taking A-levels. Of the 39 applications, 28 had or were likely to secure alternative programmes at UWE, 6 had confirmed their intention to take up their insurance offer, the remaining 5 were still unresolved. AVC Bensted offered his thanks to colleagues in Admission and Recruitment for the care and professionalism with which they had managed the University's contact with applicants.
- AB09.06.5.7 AVC Bensted reminded the Board that the panel's starting position had been to retain what could be retained. The panel was therefore of the opinion that there was an opportunity to rethink the University's approach to Chinese including restructuring it as part of Business programmes. In respect of the University Language Programme (ULP), the panel was of the view that, despite the impact of the loss of HEFCE funding, there was a future in the form of a modern languages centre which would have implications for staffing and would require a new vision and mission. The recommendation was that the ULP cease in its current form from 2010 and be reintroduced thereafter. Similarly in

respect of EFL, the recommendation was that it be retained, relocated into a new department of English and Linguistics, where it could be built upon given the strength of opportunities within the institutional context of internationalisation and the market opportunities available to the University.

- AB09.06.5.8 Although languages was an important part of university life and culture, the University could not ignore the national and financial context within which it was operating. In light of the recommendations being made, the panel had concluded it would therefore be difficult to justify the retention of a department of Languages and Area Studies.
- AB09.06.5.9 Dr Fletcher, head of the department of Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies, responded by commenting on her deep concerns about the process that had taken place. She had not seen the report of the recent review and, as head of department, felt that neither she, nor her department, had been appropriately consulted as the recognised experts. The decision to cease recruitment had been taken on June 1st based on September 2008 figures and current figures which did not recognise the number of students recruited at Clearing. On June 1st the programmes had been removed from the UCAS website. The department had been informed on June 2nd via an email from the Executive Dean about some of the points in the report followed by a meeting with staff on June 3rd who, at that point, were not aware that the programmes had been withdrawn.
- AB09.06.5.10 Dr Fletcher queried how the recommendations supported the University's internationalisation agenda and the flexibility of the modular structure. She commented on the relevance of the data used by the panel which did not, in her view, sufficiently recognise the difference between UWE's social science based approach with the largely humanities-based approach of many of the comparator institutions used. The department had received 28 letters of support from external bodies. Dr Fletcher was particularly concerned that the recommendations from this second review were at considerable variance to those of the earlier review led by the Executive Dean and that they contradicted the Vice Chancellor's previous indications that languages should be put on a stronger footing. Staff in the department had gone to considerable lengths to make adjustments and think creatively about ways of making languages sustainable. The department continued to believe it had a strong contribution to make to the university, to the region and nationally.
- AB09.06.5.11 Mr Thomas, SSH Executive Dean, pointed out to the Board that this was a sad day for the University and that specialist language provision had been part of the University for many years tracing back to Bristol Polytechnic. For this reason, the initial review which he had led, and which had reported in December 2008, had recommended the retention of languages notwithstanding the financial context. Departmental staff were in considerable shock having not been prepared for the recommendations arising out of the most recent review. The department had not been given access to the data underpinning the review. Mr Thomas had met with staff and the UWESU president and had written to all students within the department. A meeting with student course representatives would be held next week with the aim of reassuring students of the faculty's commitment to ensuring the highest quality experience for students remaining at UWE.
- AB09.06.5.12 The President of the Students' Union expressed his regret at the

position the University was in and complimented the University on the way in which communication between it and the Students' Union had been managed. This had provided the Students' Union with ample opportunity to prepare for its role in supporting students. The Students' Union was confident that the University's commitment to ensuring the highest academic standards and quality of provision for continuing students was genuine and would be realised. The Students' Union would be meeting with representatives from staff unions the following day. The Students' Union recognised the complexity of issues facing the University and the difficult decisions that had to be made both at UWE, and in the sector more widely. The Students' Union saw their priority as supporting current students and ensuring sufficient opportunities for them to provide feedback from now onwards.

AB09.06.5.13

During discussion, the following comments were made:

- the proposals had implications for other programmes that involved languages particularly those programmes with placement years, and that the potential impact on student numbers across the University needed to be understood and recognised
- whilst there was recognition of the difficult decisions facing the University, concerns had been expressed by staff regarding the apparent speed with which decisions had been taken and whether this would set a precedent for the way in which the executive operated in the future
- in light of the options available to the Board of Governors there was some interest in why the decision to close applications had been taken as early as it had been although the difficulty of balancing consultation with staff and supporting applicants at risk was acknowledged
- the future of languages research had been extensively explored during the review in addition to the teaching provision
- the situation facing UWE was not unique to the University; several universities had already taken difficult decisions concerning languages. The underlying issue was about the position of languages in the nation's school sector which had led to the rejection of language based degrees by significant numbers.

AB09.06.5.14

The Board acknowledged the sadness of the situation facing the University and concluded in its advice to the Vice Chancellor that:

- the financial issues for the University and for the sector were irrefutable
- the recommendations being put forward were in no way a reflection on the ingenuity and commitment of staff in the department
- the process by which staff were involved could have been improved
- there was a need to take account of the impact on, and opportunities for, other programmes so that opportunities for maintaining language provision at the University were realised building on recently and soon to be published reports on the national future of languages
- the commitment to protecting the experience of continuing students (including those on existing joint programmes with other subjects) must be of paramount importance in moving

forward

ACTION: DEPUTY VICE CHANCELLOR RUSHFORTH

AB09.06.5.15 The Chair thanked members for their contribution to what had necessarily been a difficult discussion on a sensitive issue.

AB09.06.6 **REGULATORY FRAMEWORK**

AB09.06.6.1 **STUDENT NON COMPLETION**

Paper AB09/6/6 was received.

AB09.06.6.1.1 Assistant Vice Chancellor Channon introduced the paper to the Board.

AB09.06.6.1.2 The paper summarised the outcomes from the deliberations of the Task and Finish Group convened by the Vice Chancellor (AB09.3.5.3) to advise him on the actions that should be taken to mitigate the consequences, intended and unintended, of:

- a) the outcomes of a recent HEFCE audit on the University's HESES return
- b) concerns previously expressed in the University about the perceived existence of a 'resit culture'

AB09.06.6.1.3 The report and recommendations had been considered by Faculty Boards during May and also with representatives from the UWESU and from ITS. There was widespread support for the proposed changes, some issues identified for further clarification, and significant concern about the need to communicate the changes effectively to staff and to students.

AB09.06.6.1.4 During the discussion the following points were noted:

- reduction of the numbers of non-submissions was vital to reduce the loss of core funding
- the introduction of a submission window would need to be communicated extensively to students
- the introduction of a resit fee could exacerbate debt management issues across the student population and this should be monitored
- ISIS system functionality would not be ready for the spring 2010 examining boards given the complexity of the proposed changes.

AB09.06.6.1.5 The Board AGREED:

- there was broad support for the recommendations
- effective communication to students and staff would be essential to the successful implementation of the regulatory changes
- the changes would be reviewed and monitored for their effectiveness after one full year of operation
- a manual override of ISIS would need to take place for the spring 2010 examining boards
- ISIS to be adapted and ready for use at the summer 2010 boards

ACTION: ACADEMIC REGISTRAR

AB09.06.6.2 **EXTERNAL ADVISERS**

Paper AB09/6/7 was received.

AB09.06.6.2.1 Dr A Rudd introduced the paper.

- AB09.06.6.2.2 The paper reviewed the roles and responsibilities of external advisers, together with criteria for appointment, the appointment process and fee levels and put forward recommendations to update current procedures that had been in place since 2001.
- AB09.06.6.2.3 The Board AGREED the recommendations.
ACTION: ACADEMIC REGISTRAR
- AB09.06.6.3 **PROPOSAL TO VARY REGULATION G1.8.6-7**
Paper AB09/6/8 was received.
- AB09.06.6.3.1 Dr A Rudd introduced the paper.
- AB09.06.6.3.2 The paper informed the Board of the validation of new programmes of study to be delivered by the Bristol Old Vic Theatre School (BOVTS), recommending a variant to Academic Regulations and Procedures to meet the expectations of the Conservatoire of Dance and Drama and align with practice in the professional training.
- AB09.06.6.3.3 The Board AGREED the recommendations.
ACTION: ACADEMIC REGISTRAR
- AB09.06.6.4 **PROPOSAL TO VARY PGCERT PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE AND MANAGEMENT IN ARCHITECTURE REGULATIONS**
Paper AB09/6/9 was received.
- AB09.06.6.4.1 Dr A Rudd introduced the paper.
- AB09.06.6.4.2 The paper informed the Board of the validation of new programmes of study recommending a variant to Academic Regulations and Procedures to meet the expectations of the professional bodies, the Architects Registration Board (ARB) and the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA).
- AB09.06.6.4.3 The Board AGREED the recommendations noting that Point 4 in Section 6 would need to reflect the change in the number of automatic resits as approved by the Board (AB09.06.5.14).
ACTION: ACADEMIC REGISTRAR
- AB09.06.6.5 **PROPOSAL TO VARY REGULATIONS FOR THE LEGAL PRACTICE COURSE AND THE PGDIP LEGAL PRACTICE**
Paper AB09/6/10 was received.
- AB09.06.6.5.1 Dr A Rudd introduced the paper.
- AB09.06.6.5.2 The Bristol Institute of Legal Practice at the University of the West of England was a Solicitors Regulatory Authority (SRA) authorised provider of the Legal Practice Course, which was incorporated into the University award Postgraduate Diploma Legal Practice. The Assessment Regulations must comply with the requirements laid down by the SRA and therefore a variation of the University Academic Regulations and Procedures was recommended.
- The Board AGREED the recommendations.
ACTION: ACADEMIC REGISTRAR
- AB09.06.6.6 **PROPOSAL TO APPROVE A MASTERS IN TEACHING AND LEARNING**

Paper AB09/6/11 was received.

AB09.06.6.6.1 Dr A Rudd introduced the paper.

AB09.06.6.6.2 The Training and Development Agency for schools (TDA) was given the remit by government to develop the Masters in Teaching and Learning (MTL) Programme in March 2008. The School of Education successfully led a consortium of South West Regional HEIs in a bid to provide a Masters Degrees in Teaching and Learning. The School of Education therefore recommended an addition to the list of awards granted in the University Academic Regulations and Procedures of the award of Masters Teaching and Learning and of Postgraduate Diploma Teaching and Learning.

AB09.06.6.6.3 The Board AGREED the recommendation and noted particular congratulations to the School of Education for their expedience in developing this award. The Board also noted that variations to the Academic Regulations and Procedures may be required in due course.

ACTION: ACADEMIC REGISTRAR

AB09.06.6.7 **STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP WITH VCU: PROGRESS REPORT**
Paper AB09/6/12 was received.

AB09.06.6.7.1 S Yilmaz introduced the paper as an update to paper AB08/2/06.

AB09.06.6.7.2 The paper summarised the UWE/VCU partnership activity since February 2008 and made the following proposals:

- for variations to UWE Academic Regulations and Procedures to support the International Variants to existing UWE programmes;
- to enhance the eligibility criteria and selection process for the students seeking to take an International Variant;
- for the title to be conferred on successful completion of an International Variant.

AB09.06.6.7.3 During the discussion the following points were noted:

- the Board was pleased to note students were showing an interest in the variants
- caution was noted on the amount of resources involved in the development of international programmes
- changes to assessment regulations must reflect the changes made at Academic Board AB09.06.5.14.

AB09.06.6.7.4 The Board AGREED the recommendations.

ACTION: ACADEMIC REGISTRAR

AB09.06.6.8 **CITY OF BATH COLLEGE**

AB09.06.6.8.1 The Board noted the approval to designate City of Bath College as an affiliated institution within the UWE Federation.

ACTION: ACADEMIC REGISTRAR

AB09.06.7 **DISABILITY TASK FORCE**
Paper AB09/6/13 was received.

AB09.06.7.1 Assistant Vice Chancellor Bensted introduced the paper.

AB09.06.7.2 The paper provided recommendations to improve the quality of teaching and learning support for disabled students through the development of a distributed, but coordinated, model of student support and improved

systems for the sharing of relevant information.

- AB09.06.7.3 During the discussion the following points were noted:
- thanks were given to J Longhurst and C Wickham on the work undertaken during this project
 - implementation would take place from September 2009
 - a paper outlining the relevant resources required to implement the recommendations would be submitted to the Vice Chancellor. There was recognition of the challenge to resources.
 - UWESU welcomed the paper
- AB09.06.7.4 The Board AGREED the recommendations, noting the challenge to resources. The Board also requested an annual report from the Disability Working Group on this strategy.
- ACTION: DISABILITY WORKING GROUP**
- AB09.06.8 **PROPOSAL TO REBRAND THE DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND ARCHITECTURE IN THE FACULTY OF ENVIRONMENT AND TECHNOLOGY**
Paper AB09/6/14 was received.
- AB09.06.8.1 The Chair introduced a proposal from the Faculty of Environment and Technology to rename the current Department of Planning and Architecture would align the Department with common practice in other HEIs and with the relevant professional bodies where 'School of ...' was common practice for Planning and Architecture. Internal organisation and management structures would remain unchanged.
- AB09.06.8.2 The Board AGREED IN PRINCIPAL the recommendations subject to a discussion was held with the Vice Chancellor with regard to taxonomy and the general impact that the title 'School' would play in the University's current structure.
- ACTION: DEPUTY VC RUSHFORTH/
PROFESSOR M BODDY**
- AB09.06.9 **QAA INSTITUTIONAL AUDIT**
- AB09.06.9.1 Subsequent to the meeting the Academic Registrar has reported that the final report will be published in mid July and that the report and the University's action plan will be presented to the first meeting in the new academic session.
- ACTION: ACADEMIC REGISTRAR**
- AB09.06.10 **STUDENT EXPERIENCE**
- AB09.06.10.1 **STUDENT EXPERIENCE PROGRAMME**
Paper AB09/6/15 was noted.
- AB09.06.10.2 **STUDENT MATTERS**
- AB09.06.10.2.1 The UWESU President noted there were no items to report.
- AB09.06.11 **ACADEMIC CALENDAR**
- AB09.06.11.1 The Academic Registrar noted that number of propositions was with faculties and services for consultation. Following the consultation process the working group would meet again to prepare a proposal for presentation to Academic Board in October 2009.

AB09.06.12 WEB FILTERING

The Director of ITS provided an oral report.

AB09.06.12.1 Some internet sites accessed via UWE had recently been blocked; mainly relating to pornographic and hacking tool retrieval sites. The blocking of some sites had caused problems for staff across the University, e.g. Criminologists. The Information Systems Co-ordinating Group sought the Board's guidance on proceeding with naming specific sites to be blocked and/or unblocked.

AB09.06.12.2 Volunteers from a number of Schools and Services across the University agreed to meet as a group to work on the issue.

AB09.06.12.3 The Board AGREED the action, requesting the group report back to the Board with the outcome.

ACTION: HEAD OF IT SERVICES

AB09.06.13 RESEARCH

AB09.06.13.1 RESEARCH STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION GROUP

Paper AB09/06/16 was received.

AB09.06.13.2 Pro-Vice Chancellor P Gough introduced the paper.

AB09.06.13.3 The paper set out the Vice Chancellor's response to the report and recommendations to the Research Strategy Implementation Group.

AB09.06.13.4 The Board SUPPORTED the recommendations in the paper noting that progress was already underway.

AB09.06.14 REPORTS FROM FACULTY BOARD

AB09.06.14.1 The Board noted that the March and May 2009 meetings of Faculty Boards had discussed issues relating to:

- regulatory framework
- academic calendar
- race equality action plan
- Languages review
- master plan Phase II for Bower Ashton
- First Aid at St Matthias
- budgets
- ethics
- development of Masters programme(s?)

AB09.06.14.2 The Chair thanked the Executive Deans.

AB09.06.15 PROFESSORIAL APPOINTMENTS AND AWARDS OF HONORARY DEGREES

AB09.06.15.1 APPOINTMENTS OF EMERITUS PROFESSORS

The Board noted the following Faculty Board appointment of Emeritus Professor:

Frank Burnett (HLS)

AB09.06.16

MEETINGS OF SUB COMMITTEES AND JOINT COMMITTEES

Paper AB09/3/20 was received. The Board received the following minutes for information:

Board of Governors – 10 February 2009
Board of Governors – 10 February 2009
Bristol Business School Faculty Board – 18 January 2009
Bristol Business School Faculty Board – 11 March 2009
Creative Arts Faculty Board – 11 March 2009
Environment and Technology Faculty Board – 28 January 2009
Health and Life Sciences Faculty Board – 4 February 2009
Health and Life Sciences Faculty Board – 18 March 2009
Social Science and Humanities Faculty Board – 4 February 2009
Social Science and Humanities Faculty Board – 18 March 2009
Social Science and Humanities Faculty Board – 13 May 2009
Learning Teaching and Assessment Committee – 15 May 2009
Research Committee – 13 February 2009
Internationalisation Strategy Group – 3 February 2009
Internationalisation Strategy Group – 31 March 2009
UWE Federation Group – 2 April 2009
UWE Federation Group – 21 May 2009

AB09.06.17

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

AB09.06.17.1

REPORTED CHANGE TO LTAC MINUTES OF 15 MAY 2009

AB09.06.17.1.1

The Director of ITS reported that following a meeting with L Falconer the proposal, as noted in the minutes, to collapse Blackboard will no longer happen. The LTAC minutes will reflect this in due course.

AB09.06.17.2

CHANGES TO ACADEMIC BOARD MEMBERSHIP AND PERSONNEL

AB09.6.17.2.1

The Chair extended the Board's thanks to Helen Jackson who had acted as Clerk to Academic Board during the 2008/2009 academic session.

AB09.6.17.2.2

The Chair extended the Board's thanks to Dom Passfield, who would return to his studies following two years as the Student Representative Council President. Particular mention was made of Dom's energy, entertainment, enthusiasm and thoughtful balanced views during his presidency.

