

ACADEMIC BOARD

Minutes of the Academic Board held on Wednesday 9th December 2009.

Present: D Allen; J Bradley; Professor G Channon; P Dowdall; Professor J Duffield; M Frutos-Perez; T Goodhew; Professor P Gough; Dr M Grey; S Grive; Dr J Harrington; T Harrison (secretary); D Hawes; B Hooper; P Nolan; Professor Paul Olomolaiye; M Partington; C Rex; G Sandford; R Shaw; C Stoney; J Thomas; Dr S Waite; Professor S West (chair); G Wilson.

Apologies: Professor J Arthurs; Professor A Bensted; P Blatchford; P Catley; A Cheshire; P Jones; W Jones; J Lanham; A Mathieson; T McGoldrick; K Phillips; Professor R Ritchie; J Rushforth; R Scott.

AB09.12.1 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The Board approved the unconfirmed minutes of the meeting held on 28th October 2009.

AB09.12.2 MATTERS ARISING

AB09.12.2.1 AB09.10.2.2 – Web Filtering

AB09.12.2.1.1 The Director of ITS reminded the Board of delays with the web filtering project due to unresolved issues relating to internet performance. ITS had been investigating the reasons behind this and had concluded that the root of the problem was evidence of a significant increase in Facebook usage peaking in August 2006 with the opening of the Student Village. ITS were looking at possible technical fixes including potentially costly increases in bandwidth.

AB09.12.2.1.2 The Director of ITS suggested that the University might consider whether there should be a policy on student use of social networking sites, particularly in light of concerns expressed by students about other students using PC labs for Facebook activity which affected availability of resources. The UWESU Vice President noted recent SRC debates on issues relating to social networking and stressed the importance of differentiating between academic and social space requirements and expectations. It was pointed out that there was variation across the sector in terms of charging students for their use of social networks.

AB09.12.2.1.3 The Vice Chancellor agreed that this was not an issue that the University could ignore. Although the future strategy was to provide access to more networks with greater bandwidth, a multi-layered solution would be required in the short, medium and longer terms.

AB09.12.2.1.4 The Board agreed to refer the matter to the Learning and Teaching Executive for discussion which should take cognisance of the debates that already taken place in UWESU.

Action: PVC Channon

AB09.12.2.2 AB09.10.4.1 - UWE Academic

PVC Gough reported that the UWE Academic consultation paper had been with trade unions for some time and that this had resulted in undesirable delays in its publication. Given the importance of the initiative, a deadline would be set for a trade union response following which publication would be progressed rapidly. The intention was to move onto definitions for other staff groupings as soon as possible.

AB09.12.3 VICE CHANCELLOR'S REPORT

Paper AB/09/12/2 was received.

AB09.12.3.1 The Board received the Vice Chancellor's report, noting in particular:

Restructuring – the Vice Chancellor was moving to the establishment of the institutional Change Management Programme about which information would be circulated before Christmas. Executive Deans were clarifying their views on departmental structures within faculties and were beginning to think through the academic and administrative sub-structures. Work on service hub and spoke models was progressing well. The role of Director of Change Management had been advertised with interviews taking place on 8th January 2010. Once that appointment had been made, the Change Management Board would be set up and an institutional action plan developed. Regular reports on progress would be made to the Board thereafter.

Faculty of Creative Arts – the appointment of an acting dean would be made and announcements made before Christmas. The acting dean would be working with FCA and SSH executives to map out future strategic priorities and structures for the new faculty.

BBS – the Vice Chancellor reported that Dr Jane Harrington had been appointed to the post of Executive Dean/Pro-Vice Chancellor from 1st January 2010. The current acting executive dean, Mr Warwick Jones, would be joining the directorate to support a range of institutional projects. The Vice Chancellor placed on record his thanks to Mr Jones for his work as acting executive dean during a period of rapid change. The Vice Chancellor stressed the importance to the University in moving forward of a successful and innovative Business School.

Recruitment – the introduction of recruitment restrictions to new posts.

MasterPlan – the Concept Statement had been submitted to South Gloucestershire and colleagues were now working through next steps and considering other developments planned around the campus. It was imperative that the infrastructure issues were worked through with Bristol and South Gloucestershire councils to ensure transport and community issues were properly considered.

St Matthias – a change management team was now in place to manage the relocation of St Matthias during 2010/2011.

Work Load Planning – communications with heads of department were ongoing.

AB09.12.3.1 Other updates included:

Inclusive University Conference
Refugee and Migrant Support Hub
Open Day October 2009
Bio-sensing Conference
Bloodhound
Research
NESTA, Science City and the Annual HERDA SW Conference
Exhibition and Conference Centre Launch.

AB09.12.4 **LTAC ANNUAL REPORT TO THE BOARD**
Paper AB09/12/3 was received.

AB09.12.4.1 The Board received the report and noted:

- ongoing momentum on a number of projects
- improvements in connecting the deliberative functions of LTAC with the executive ability of the Learning and Teaching Executive to 'get things done'
- the development of a refreshed view of work based learning at UWE connecting with the recently approved Shell Framework
- the work undertaken by the Dean of Students on the electronic detection of plagiarism and associated support for student learning.

AB09.12.5 **HE FRAMEWORK**
Paper AB09/12/4 was received.

AB09.12.5.1 The Vice Chancellor introduced the paper by reminding the Board about the recent publication of the HE Framework which was designed to set the strategic agenda for Higher Education. The Framework had been accepted by all political parties and it was therefore unlikely to change after the election regardless of its outcome.

AB09.12.5.2 The paper mapped UWE's activities against the HE Framework priorities and statements and showed how the HE Framework itself fits with the University's own mission and strategic priorities. The paper also set out a summary of the University's progress against its strategic priorities.

AB09.12.5.3 The Vice Chancellor reminded the Board of its role in asking how the University was doing and in challenging the senior management team to explain how progress was being made. The paper would be used to inform the Board of Governors about the academic activities of the University. The views of Academic Board would be important in

connecting the two Boards.

AB09.12.5.4

During discussion the following points were noted:

- the importance of ensuring the student experience was appropriately referenced and themed throughout the paper;
- current work on the Research Strategy to update it in light of RAE2008 and REF2012
- whether there were too many overlapping strategies, many of which did not yet have detailed implementation plans
- possible inconsistencies between the modular framework and the aspirations set out in individual strategies
- current work on the University's interactions with business, their fundamental role to the University and the need to make this an equal partner to research activity.

AB09.12.5.5

The Vice Chancellor noted the need for an overarching academic strategy which would articulate how the individual strategies created a coherent whole. An institutional academic strategy would respond to issues around the changing nature of student expectations, the relationship between the learner and the facilitator, and the important representative role of students in the University's activities. An overarching strategy would also enable the University to debate the structures and regulations required to support the strategy. The Vice Chancellor was looking to produce a draft early in the New Year.

AB09.12.5.6

The Vice Chancellor further reported that he had recently met with the government's HE Policy Adviser to discuss political understandings about the student learning experience with the intention of seeking a move away from discussions about contact hours and about moving away from passivity to co-creation. This view was clearly not represented in the policy documents which were looking for quick political wins. It was likely that a small group involving sector representatives would be set up by No10 to refine some of the political thinking.

Action: Vice Chancellor

AB09.12.6

ANNUAL REPORT ON ACADEMIC STANDARDS AND QUALITY

Paper AB09/12/5 was received.

AB09.12.6.1

The Vice Chancellor noted that this was the first time the Board had received a report of this nature; its aim was to improve the Board's role in oversight of academic standards and quality. The report identified some interesting areas that would require further exploration, including, for example, variations across the institution in degree classifications. The Vice Chancellor noted the importance of being able to publish data about the University's performance more openly in future.

AB09.12.6.2

During discussion the following issues were noted:

- Hartpury data should be included in future reports
- competitor data would be useful alongside discipline data

- data on the reasons for withdrawal would be useful to consider why students were withdrawing and to test variability across faculties
- data would need to be provided at the level of the department/programme to enable programme leaders and departmental leaders to engage. Heads of departments should have full access to data warehouse and toolsets to enable them to drill down to where action could be taken so that an oversight report better supported organisational learning and performance management
- the current review of academic governance arrangements would need to ensure that Faculty Boards engaged with faculty summary data at Faculty Boards before it was considered by Academic Board
- current work on QME data requirements which had now been incorporated into the re-articulation of the QME Framework to provide more ongoing, in-year, monitoring and evaluation data in addition to the annual overview report
- the University's business intelligence tool could provide an enormous amount of information at programme level which needed to be advertised more widely so that colleagues could better understand the ways in which data could be used to support planning and development

AB09.12.6.3

The Board agreed to invite each executive dean to review the data currently available in light of a series of questions for consideration and to report back to the March meeting on their analysis and action.

Action : Academic Registrar/Executive Deans

AB09.12.7

REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

AB09.12.7.1

RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE POLICY

Paper AB09/12/6 was received.

The Board agreed to approve the policy for immediate implementation subject to the following comments:

- the need for the request form to be appropriately sensitive to the needs of different faith communities;
- the need to observe and align to partner institutions' religious observance arrangements
- the need to define the difference between strict and casual observance
- the need to ensure appropriate communication to students of the new policy
- the need to clarify whether there was anything equivalent for staff

Action : Academic Registrar

AB09.12.7.2

POSTGRADUATE AWARDS : DIFFERENTIAL AWARDS

Paper AB09/12/7 was received.

The Board agreed to approve the policy to revise the requirements for the award of differential levels of awards at Masters level for implementation in time for the February 2010 examining boards.

Action : Academic Registrar

AB09.12.7.3

MASTERS IN TEACHING AND LEARNING

Paper AB/09/12/8 was received.

The Board agreed to approve the variant assessment regulations for the Masters in Teaching and Learning programme.

Action : Academic Registrar

AB09.12.8

STUDENT EXPERIENCE

AB09.12.8.1

REPORT FROM THE DEAN OF STUDENTS

Paper AB09/12/9 was received.

The Board received the report from the Dean of Students.

AB09.12.8.2

REPORT FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE SRC

Paper AB09/12/10 was received.

The SRC Vice President reported on current activities and priorities including:

- progress being made on assessment feedback activities
- preparation of a paper on anonymous marking for LTAC in February 2010
- a group convened by the President to discuss issues of safety on campus to inform Masterplanning. The Board noted the need to align this with work being undertaken by the University's Health and Safety Management Group
- ongoing review of the Constitution and its link with university restructuring - a draft model would be consulted on in February 2010 prior to the Board of Governors' meeting in May 2010 before ratification in November 2010 by the UWESU AGM for implementation in 2011/2012
- recent concerns expressed by student councils regarding a perceived lack of engagement with student concerns about faculty restructuring – the Vice Chancellor suggested a meeting with UWESU officers in the New Year to discuss these issues in more detail and to consider ways of resolving them. A report would be made to the Board on progress
- St Matts – further discussion with the Vice Chancellor's executive on the proposed transfer to Frenchay

Action: Vice Chancellor/UWESU Vice-President

- AB09.12.8.3 ANNUAL REVIEW OF COMPLAINTS**
Paper AB09/12/11 was received.
- The Board received the report.
- AB09.12.8.4 ANNUAL REPORT OF COMPLAINTS REFERRED TO THE OIA**
Paper AB09/12/12 was received.
- The Board received the report.
- AB09.12.9 RESEARCH AND KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE**
- AB09.12.9.1 CENTRE FOR ENVIRONMENT AND PLANNING : CHANGE OF NAME**
- The Board note that, at its meeting on 13th November 2009, the Research Committee had approved a change of name for the Centre for Environment and Planning to the Centre for Sustainable Planning and Environments.
- AB09.12.10 QAA ACTIVITIES**
- AB09.12.10.1 THE FUTURE OF THE QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM**
Paper AB09/12/13 was received.
- The Board received a briefing paper on the HEFCE sub-committee for Teaching, Quality, and the Student Experience report to investigate concerns raised over the quality of English higher education. A copy of the full HEFCE report and recommendations can be found at http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/hefce/2009/09_40/.
- AB09.12.10.2 QAA INSTITUTIONAL AUDIT**
- The Board noted that the recommendations arising from the 2009 QAA Institutional Audit were being used to develop a re-articulation of the University's Quality Management and Enhancement Framework. Proposals would be brought to the March 2010 meeting.
- AB09.12.11 REPORTS FROM FACULTY BOARDS**
- AB09.12.11.1** Executive Deans reported that the focus of recent Faculty Boards had been on departmental restructuring, NSS action planning and celebration of faculty activities. In addition, the following specific issues were discussed by individual faculty boards
- FET - proposals to move away from use of FBE-Web and to transfer entirely to the Blackboard virtual learning environment
Hartpur - variability in student performance in Foundation degrees
SSH – ensuring the quality of the student experience during the transfer of St Matts; the Languages review which would need to be brought to the Board in March 2010
HLS – ensuring the quality of the student experience during the transfer of Glenside; the science futures review; the NMC review.

AB09.12.11.2 The Vice Chancellor congratulated Hartpury on a recent outstanding OFTSED report

AB09.12.12 PROFESSORIAL APPOINTMENTS AND THE AWARD OF HONORARY DEGREES

The Board noted and congratulated Professor Peter Gold (SSH) on his recent appointment as Emeritus Professor.

AB09.12.13 MEETINGS OF SUB COMMITTEES AND JOINT COMMITTEES

Paper AB09/12/14 was received.

Board of Governors – 6 October 2009

Bristol Business School Faculty Board - 14 October 2009

Creative Arts Faculty Board – 14 October 2009

Environment and Technology Faculty Board - 14 October 2009

Health and Life Sciences Faculty Board – 21 October 2009

Social Sciences and Humanities Faculty Board – 21 October 2009

Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee – 6 November 2009

Research Committee – 13 November 2009

Internationalisation Strategy Group – 10 November 2009

UWE Federation Group – 12 November 2009

AB09.12.14 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

AB09.12.14.1 PHD DUAL AWARD PROPOSALS

The Board agreed to approve a proposal to establish a framework for a PhD dual registration, leading to dual awards of the University of Paris-Diderot (Paris7) and the University, subject to noting the importance of ensuring that further utilisation of the framework would need to be explicitly linked to the University's internationalisation strategy.

Action : Academic Registrar

AB09.12.14.2 RESEARCH EXCELLENCE FRAMEWORK 2012

The Board noted that the deadline for institutional responses to the REF was Wednesday 16th December. The University's response would be reported to the March meeting of the Board for information.

Action : Academic Registrar

AB09.12.15

DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Wednesday 24th March 2010

Wednesday 9th June 2010