



ACADEMIC BOARD

Minutes of a meeting of the Academic Board held on Wednesday 8 December 2010.

Present: D Allen; Professor G Atwood; P Blatchford; Professor M Boddy; T Goodhew; Dr J Harrington; A Mathieson; Professor J McLeod; P Morgan; P Nolan; C Offler; M Partington; Professor L Raphael Reed; Professor R Ritchie; J Rushforth (chair); B Senior; F Tolmie; Dr S Waite; G Wilson.

Apologies: P Catley; M Frutos-Perez; A Gilkison; Professor P Gough; Dr M Grey; P Hume; P Jones; Professor H Langton; Professor J Longhurst; Professor G Lyons; T McGoldrick; Professor R Means; Professor P Olomolaiye; R Scott; Professor S West.

In Attendance: J Bradley; A Cheshire; S Grive; T Harrison (secretary); C Rex.

AB10.12.1 TERMS OF REFERENCE/MEMBERSHIP

Paper AB10/12/1 was received.

The Board noted its terms of reference and membership.

AB10.12.2 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

Paper AB10/12/Mins was received.

The Board approved the unconfirmed minutes of the meeting held on 27 October 2010.

AB10.12.3 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

AB10.12.3.1 AB10.10.2.2.1 Academic Governance – the Board noted that an interim review of the new arrangements would be undertaken by correspondence during the early Spring Term and the outcomes and recommendations reported to the March meeting of the Board.

AB10.12.3.2 REPORT OF CHAIR'S ACTIONS SINCE THE LAST MEETING

The Board noted the following approvals by Chair's Action since the last meeting:

- (a) change of award title of the BSc (Hons) Equine Sports Science to BSc (Hons) Equestrian Sports Science with effect from the September 2011 intake;
- (b) change of award title of the BSc (Hons) and associated interim awards to BA (Hons) Business Management with effect from the September 2011 intake.

AB10.12.4 VICE CHANCELLOR'S REPORT

Paper AB10/12/2 was received.

AB10.12.4.1 The Board received the Vice Chancellor's report and updates on the following:

- planning process for 2010-2011;
- horizon scanning and risk management update;
- the most recent meeting of the Board of Governors;
- strategy updates on the work of the Vice Chancellor's Executive Groups.

AB10.12.4.2 During discussion the following issues were noted:

- (a) the impact of reduced funding on the University's widening participation activities - the Chair confirmed that the University remained committed to widening participation and the cessation of Aim Higher funding suggested opportunities for the University to explore;
- (b) the University's portfolio review and decisions taken to remove programmes that were not performing to target especially those with low tariff on entry scores – it was important to ensure that students entering with low tariff on entry scores were appropriately supported to achieve the highest outcomes but also to remind faculties that no programme would be put forward for removal on the basis of failing to reach performance targets on the basis of a single criteria only;
- (c) joint honours programmes and issues relating to the way in which the process of removing poor performing programmes had been implemented in faculties following approval by Academic Board of the criteria to be applied. The need for academic and financial planning processes to be joined up was stressed.

AB10.12.5 ACADEMIC PLANNING PROCESS

AB10.12.5.1 The Deputy Vice Chancellor reported on initial discussions that had recently taken place with Executive Deans and Business Intelligence and Planning. The operating assumptions had been agreed as:

- lack of any growth in terms of student numbers (and decreases in PGT market);
- significant funding cuts across the board;
- modest pay increase;
- the receipt of increased tuition fees would not be sufficient to close deficit gaps;
- implications regarding tighter border controls on international activities.

The financial gap to be bridged was significant over the next three years and opportunities to increase income and reduce expenditure were being actively pursued. Faculties and professional services would be expected to deliver additional savings through the forthcoming planning round. Faculty planning propositions were expected by February 2011 leading to draft plans and budgets in March 2011 at the same time as the HEFCE grant letter was received. This would mean the process could be finalised by May 2011.

AB10.12.5.2 There were areas of the University that were operating effectively. NSS scores for the University's learning resources were highlighted as were successes in research and knowledge exchange investment. There were however a significant number of programmes that were below average in terms of key indicators and the institutional withdrawal rate was unsustainable. Key areas of priority for faculties and professional services to consider would be:

- student experience and engagement with students with a clear and sustained focus on improving NSS scores;
- tackling and improving withdrawal rates;
- building on successes in employability;
- portfolio attractiveness - growth in some areas would undoubtedly need to be supported through disinvestment in others;
- international markets and diversifying types of activity;
- managing interdisciplinary;
- reducing the level of subsidy/investment in research and focusing on research priorities;
- increasing knowledge exchange opportunities;
- preparation for the Research Excellence Framework;
- continuation of work to develop development pathways for all staff and the implementation of performance management arrangements.

AB10.12.6 **ANNUAL REPORT ON ACADEMIC STANDARDS AND QUALITY**
Paper AB10/12/3 was received.

AB10.12.6.1 The Academic Registrar introduced the second annual report on the University's academic standards and quality noting that there was still some progress to be made to improve the content and analysis of the report.

AB10.12.6.2 During discussion the following points were made:

- the information provided was interesting and it was useful to receive it as a single summative report. Comparator data would be useful to review UWE against benchmark institutions as would data at departmental level to better understand issues;
- there needed to be greater analysis of the data to better understand the key academic standards and quality issues together with clear identification of the issues on which Academic Board should be invited to take a view and/or to request further work to be undertaken;
- the student retention data was a cause of concern and was a trend that wasn't improving; further exploration would be undertaken in the planning round;
- the need to better understand the performance of students from under-represented groups;
- the variation across the University in the award of good honours needed to be explored.

AB10.12.6.3 The Board agreed:

- (i) that the outcomes from the forthcoming planning round would be brought to the March meeting of Academic Board;
- (ii) to invite the Assistant Vice Chancellor (LTSEE) and Academic Registrar to discuss follow up action and to finalise the report to the

- Board of Governors;
- (iii) that the review of the role of the viva (page 32) should be referred to LTSE rather than RKEE.

ACTION: JR/AC (i); AVC (LTSEE)/AR (ii); AVC (LTSEE) (iii)

AB10.12.7 REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CHANGES TO UWE ACADEMIC REGULATIONS AND PROCEDURES 2009-2010
Paper AB10/12/4 was received.

AB10.12.7.1 The Academic Registrar introduced the report.

AB10.12.7.2 During discussion the following points were noted:

- the honesty and openness of the report was welcomed;
- the report made the case for the value of undertaking equality; impact assessments at the earliest possible stage in the development of policy;
- the impact of the non completion (F12) regulation on 'punishing the good student' was noted and recognised as being out of step with other HEIs;
- it was unfortunate that the University had reneged on its original intentions in respect of late work;
- students were increasingly interested in knowing what happened to the fees received by the University;
- the impact on international students and the University's partners had been considerable.

AB10.12.7.3 The Board agreed:

- (i) to invite the Academic Registrar to re-confirm guidance to examining boards on condoned failures in time for the Spring 2010 Examining Boards;
- (ii) to invite the LTSEE to consider and develop and institutional definition of 'good academic standing' and associated monitoring principles;
- (iii) to invite the Academic Registrar to bring forward proposals relating to improving the University's extenuating circumstances procedures;
- (iv) to ensure that the Board take seriously its responsibility for ensuring that all future regulatory changes were modelled and consulted upon effectively and that any agreements for change were underpinned by an appropriate implementation and communication plan.

ACTION: AR (i) and (iii); AVC (LTSEE) (ii)

AB10.12.8 ANNUAL REVIEWS OF COMPLAINTS AND ACADEMIC APPEALS 2009/2010

AB10.12.8.1 Internal Complaints 2009/2010.
Paper AB10/12/5 was received.

AB10.12.8.1.1 The Academic Registrar introduced the report stressing that the University should expect to see continuing increases in the number of complaints. The report would be shared with the Board of Governors. During discussion the following points were made:

- the importance of being able to record level 1 complaints; the report did not accurately reflect the number of complaints actually received at level 1 (for example complaints received by UWESU in relation to the ULink service or timetabling were not recorded as significant issues in the report);
- the need to make better use of complaints to enhance service provision and to close follow up action loops;
- the importance of providing training and support for staff to ensure they were fully aware of the difference between feedback and a complaint and of the mechanisms for responding appropriately;
- the usefulness of separating service complaints from those made by students about their academic provision;
- there appeared to be a correlation between matters that arose through complaints and NSS scores which would be worth investigating further.

AB10.12.8.2 Complaints referred to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) 2009/2010

Paper AB10/12/6 was received.

AB10.12.8.2.1 The Academic Registrar introduced the report again stressing that the University should expect to see continuing increases in the number of complaints referred to the OIA. The Board was informed that considerable effort was being put into managing the University's relationship with the OIA and that feedback from the OIA had been more positive recently. There was an urgent need to ensure that institutional learning from complaints was shared across the University and that action loops were closed. The report would be shared with the Board of Governors.

AB10.12.8.3 Academic Appeals 2009/2010

Paper AB10/12/7 was received.

AB10.12.8.3.1 The Academic Registrar introduced the report. The Chair of the newly constituted Academic Appeals Panel commented on the success of the panel approach and its focus on ensuring that the learning from the process could be identified and progressed as evidenced by the report. There was further work to do to improve the consistency across the University of the treatment of extenuating circumstances. Decisions taken by the panel in respect of academic appeals were noted as having been more consistent than in the previous model.

AB10.12.8.3.2 The Board agreed to approve the recommendations for enhancement as set out in the report.

ACTION: Academic Registrar

AB10.12.9 THE APPROVAL OF COLLABORATIVE OR OFFSITE DELIVERY OF UWE MODULES

Paper AB10/12/8 was received.

The Board agreed to approve a proposal to introduce a process whereby the University can make an informed decision to approve partners to deliver modules that they have not otherwise been approved to deliver as part of a named Award, or that are intended to contribute to the Shell Award Framework.

ACTION: Academic Registrar

AB10.12.10 FIELDS OF STUDY : FACULTY OF ENVIRONMENT AND TECHNOLOGY

Paper AB10/12/9 was received.

The Board agreed to endorse the re-alignment of Fields of Study with the academic departments in the Faculty of Environment and Technology and to create a new Interdisciplinary Field noting that the changes would now need to be reflected on ISIS2.

ACTION: PVC/Executive Dean FET

AB10.12.11 STUDENT EXPERIENCE

Paper AB10/12/10 was received.

AB10.12.11.1 The Board received the report from the Dean of Students.

AB10.12.11.2 The SRC President reported on current activities and priorities as follows:

- UWESU Constitution - the new constitution had been approved at the recent AGM prior to ratification by the Board of Governors. Elections would take place in the new year aligned to the new structure;
- UWESU General Manager – the recruitment process for a new General Manager was in progress;
- Student representative issues were highlighted as: timetabling (publication and changes and the structure of days); travel from Frenchay to St Matts and the impact on students' enrolments; Blackboard issues had been discussed with ITS; the student experience of GDP; contact hours concerns about communication and implementation issues;
- at the recent AGM motions had been passed on protesting against increases in tuition fees and support for the occupation; adoption of a university wide smart card and involvement of students on the project board; doing more for students engaged in overseas placements; communication between the University and students and between the UWESU and students;
- there had been a recent debate between students and the Vice Chancellor about the University's funding position which had resulted in the production of an open letter from the Vice Chancellor to all students;
- discussions were taking place with students at Bower Ashton about their expectations prior to applying and delivery of those expectations when they arrived.

AB10.12.12 PROFESSORIAL APPOINTMENTS

The Board noted the following professorial appointments made since the last meeting:

Professor Tony (Charles) Rhodes – Health and Life Sciences from 1 November 2010;

Professor Anthony Killard – Health and Life Sciences from 10 January 2011.

AB10.12.13 UNIVERSITY CAREERS SERVICE

The Board congratulated the Careers Service's successful Matrix

assessment as part of their re-accreditation.

AB10.12.14 HONORARY DEGREES CONFERRED DURING 2010

Paper AB10/12/11 was received.

The Board noted the summary of honorary degrees awarded by the University in 2010.

AB10.12.15 MEETINGS OF SUB COMMITTEES AND JOINT COMMITTEES

AB10/12/12

The Board received the following:

Board of Governors – 21 September 2010

Academic Standards and Quality CAHE - 13 October 2010

Academic Standards and Quality FBL - 13 October 2010

Academic Standards and Quality FET - 20 October 2010

Academic Standards and Quality HLS - 20 October 2010

Academic Standards and Quality Hartpury - 20 October 2010

Research Knowledge and Exchange (Business Engagement) CAHE - 20 October 2010

Research Knowledge and Exchange (Business Engagement) FBL - 20 October 2010

Research Knowledge and Exchange (Business Engagement) FET - 3 November 2010

Research Knowledge and Exchange (Business Engagement) HLS - 3 November 2010

Collaborative Provision and Academic Partnerships Management - 6 October 2010, 17 November 2010

AB10.12.16 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Wednesday 23 February 2011

Wednesday 6 April 2011

Wednesday 15 June 2011

The meeting closed at 3.25pm.