

## ACADEMIC BOARD

Minutes of the meeting of Academic Board held on Wednesday 13 June 2012.

**Present:** D Allen; Professor G Attwood Professor M Body; P Catley; A Cheshire; Professor O Doran; M Frutos-Perez; Professor P Gough; L Harrison; P Jones; Professor R Means P Nolan; C Offler; Professor P Olomolaiye; M Partington; O Reid; Professor R Ritchie; J Rushforth (Chair); B Senior; F Tolmie; S Waite;

**Apologies:** A Gilkison; T Goodhew; Dr. S Grey; Dr. J Harrington; Professor H Langton; Professor J Longhurst; Professor J McLeod; J Rogers; Professor P Rawlings; Professor K Ross; R Scott-Ward; Professor S West (Chair); J Midgley.

**In Attendance:** L Barnett; J Birnie; E Brown; C Clark; F Croft; M Dobbing; S Dunbar; B Furey-King Professor J Holland; T Horton; E Okon; A Osborn (Acting Secretary); C Rex; M Underwood; A Vaughton; L Wicksteed; S Yilmaz

### AB12.6.1 MEMBERSHIP

Members noted that Prof Peter Rawlings had been nominated by the Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Creative Industries to replace Professor Raphael-Reed and that J Midgley would replace T MCGoldrick following their respective departures from the University.

### AB12.6.2 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

*Paper AB12/6/1 was received.*

Members approved the minutes of the 6 April 2012 meeting.

### AB12.6.3 MATTERS ARISING

#### AB12.6.3.1 ITS Shutdown Calendar (*paper AB12/06/2 was received*).

In response to a request from the Students' Union, it was noted that Faculties should consider shutdown weekends when scheduling coursework submission dates. A further question was raised as to the on-going necessity of shutdown weekends.

**ACTION: The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Resources Planning and Infrastructure) agreed to discuss with IT Services the necessity or otherwise of Shutdown weekends.**

#### AB12.6.3.2 Open Access to Blackboard

The Board noted that guest user access would be piloted and feedback sought from students in order to prioritise future versions of the scheme.

**AB12.6.3.2** UWE Corporate Ethics Forum (paper AB12/06/3 was received).  
Academic Board approved the following appointments to the Corporate Ethics forum:

**Academic nominees**

Doug Pringle (HLS)  
Dr Julie Woodley (HLS)  
Dr Matthew Partington (ACE)

**Professional Service nominees**

Dr Lesley Moore (RBI)  
Sara Stewart (Marketing)

Members further noted that there remained a vacancy for one more professional service nominee which could, if necessary, be appointed through Chair's Action.

**AB12.6.3.3** Academic Calendar

The Director of Corporate and Academic Services informed members that the academic calendar would fall within the remit of the new Deputy Academic Register, Rachel Cowie, who would liaise with the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Learning Teaching and Student Experience) to develop future versions.

**ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION**

**AB12.6.4** **The academic character of UWE**

**AB12.6.4.1** The Board received an update from the Chair on the progress of the planning round which to-date had not indicated that there would, or should be, a major change to the academic character of the institution. However the impact of government imposed student number controls would be hard to predict and would likely be variable between subject areas.

**AB12.6.4.2** During further discussion members noted that:

- i. the Board of Governors had welcomed presentations from the Executive Deans during March which had highlighted the strengths and challenges in each Faculty. The Board had endorsed the principle that a comprehensive curriculum entailed providing programmes with strong vertical connections across research, learning and teaching and knowledge exchange;
- ii. UWE's close links with employers had the capacity to complicate the academic portfolio planning due to unpredictable economic conditions. However in recognising the benefit of employer linked, practice based programmes this would continue to be the emphasis of many of the continuing curriculum refresh projects in each Faculty;
- iii. the Executive was committed to engaging the University community with discussions on the academic character as this would also inform the development of the 2013-2020 strategy currently under development;
- iv. in order to facilitate the involvement of as many colleagues as possible a number of focus groups for different stakeholders across the institution. Whilst much would undoubtedly result from these groups it would also be important to carefully prioritise effort where the greatest effect will be felt.

**AB12.6.4.3** Academic Board would continue to be engaged with the development of the 2013-2020 strategy over forthcoming meetings so that it may inform, and provide advice to, the Vice-Chancellor and Board of Governors as the process progressed.

## **AB12.6.5 Update from the Students' Union**

**AB12.6.5.1** The Vice President - Education discussed with the Board the student expectations of feedback, in particular that regardless of the four week requirement students were anxious to receive feedback in sufficient time to inform their next assessment; where students failed to pick up feedback this could often be ascribed to it being perceived as being too late to have perceived formative effects. Members noted that there would naturally be a tension between the quality of feedback and the time within which it was received and that this matter was currently under consideration by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Learning, Teaching and Student Experience).

**AB12.6.5.2** Whist members noted that both the quality of feedback and the assessment diet had an impact on student performance it was agreed that the key determinant of success remained engagement by students with the teaching on the module. Engagement could be monitored through registers and records on access of online teaching materials, and used to spot at risk students. However currently there was no University wide attendance policy or routine monitoring of engagement other than for non-EU students.

**AB12.6.5.3** Although Monitoring could provide an insight to engagement it would not necessarily identify the underlying reasons in each case where students were disengaged. The Vice President – Education highlighted that reasons for students not engaging were many and varied and included working commitment and weaker pedagogic styles.

**AB12.6.5.4** The Students' Union President highlighted that the Community and welfare Officer had identified a number of issues related to the scheduling of examinations during times of religious observance, particularly Friday prayers, Saturday exams and examinations during Ramadan. During discussion it was noted that research had identified that the sector as a whole varied in its approach to accommodating religious observance and that although UWE did not currently have a religious observance policy, its practice was not out of step with the majority of the sector.

**AB12.6.5.5** The Chair requested that the Director of Corporate and Academic Services (CAS) develop a draft religious observance policy in conjunction with the Equality and Diversity Unit and CETTS to be presented to the board by December 2012.

**ACTION: Director of CAS**

## **QUALITY AND STANDARDS ITEMS**

### **AB12.6.6 Amendments to Regulations**

*Papers A12/06/4 – A12/06/6 were received.*

**AB12.6.6.1** The Director of CAS highlighted that the changes before members were interim patches required while the full rewrite was developed and consulted upon.

- AB12.6.6.2** Separation of the University's regulations and procedures from 2012/13  
Members noted that of the Academic Regulations and Procedures approximately one third were regulations and therefore subject to Academic Board approval and that the conflation of regulation and procedures had inhibited process innovation. The separation of regulations and procedures would not detract from the importance of following relevant processes and amendments to procedure would continue to be subject to stakeholder consultation.
- AB12.6.6.3** Academic Board **approved** the separation of the University's regulations and procedures from 2012/13.
- AB12.6.6.3** General amendments to the regulations  
Following discussion of the legal implications of the amendments proposed to regulations impacting on the recruitment and progression of international (non-EU) students as a result of guidelines from the UK Border Agency, the Board declined approval of the amendments pertaining to regulations B12.2R and G2.6R pending further legal advice.
- AB12.6.6.4** Academic Board **approved** all other amendments proposed within paper AB12/06/5.
- AB12.6.6.5** Amendments to Section F20  
Academic Board **approved** proposed changes to section F20 of the regulations subject to an amendment to F20.7p to allow students five, instead of three, working days in which to consider admitting an assessment offence. Members also noted that "notification" constituted an email to all addresses provided by the student and as a result the five days would apply from when the notification was sent.
- AB12.6.7** **Regulatory Review**  
*Paper AB12/06/7 was received.*
- AB12.6.7.1** Members broadly welcomed an update from the Academic Regulatory Framework Manager outlining the topics covered by the Academic Regulatory Framework Review working groups held during the Spring. However a number of concerns were raised in relation to:
- i. the potential misuse of relationship breakdown as an extenuating circumstance;
  - ii. the concept of self-certification where supporting evidence was unavailable;
  - iii. how students might make a judgement as to whether they were "fit to sit", and the timing of any declaration.
- AB12.6.7.2** Academic Board noted that the paper represented a work in progress and that there would be further consultation with members and the wider University community prior to final approval being sought during the 2012/13 academic year.
- AB12.6.8** **Report on the implementation of the Quality Monitoring and Enhancement Framework**  
*Paper AB12/06/08 was received.*
- AB12.6.8.1** The Head of Quality Process Management outlined that the review presented to members responded a number of questions that had arisen since the implementation of the Quality Monitoring and Enhancement Framework (QMEF) in January and the proposed approach to their resolution.

- AB12.6.8.2** Members endorsed the approach taken and noted that:
- I. it would be useful capture feedback from Curriculum Approval Panel (CAP) Chair's to inform future CAP development;
  - II. the close specification of the regulations on the external review had caused some difficulty and colleagues would welcome the opportunity to harmonise practice with that for external examiners which could include taking comments in advance of the meeting or running virtual CAPs;
  - III. the single quality scheme needed to be appropriately embedded into the QMEF.

- AB12.6.8.3** Academic Board **approved**:
- i. the consideration of payment to facilitate the student voice in the approval process;
  - ii. further clarification of membership and role of QMEF Design Teams;
  - iii. the use of, appropriate, nominees where a Chair could not attend a CAP;
  - iv. the introduction of an impact assessment to determine whether curriculum changes are considered to be major or minor;
  - v. amendments to the rules governing external reviewers;
  - vi. all recommendations made in respect of Portfolio Review Group.

**AB12.6.9** **Report from the Collaborative Provision and Academic Partnerships Committee (CPAPC)**  
*Paper AB12/6/9 was received.*

**AB12.6.9.1** The Chair highlighted that it was essential for Academic Board to engage with the work of CPAPC so that it could take an informed view of the quality and standards of Awards granted in its name but delivered by Partner organisations.

- AB12.6.9.2** The Pro Vice-Chancellor Partnerships, Diversity and Civic Engagement introduced the report and thanked CPAPC members and the Senior Collaborative Provision Officer (International) for their work compiling the report and highlighted that:
- i. CPACP had taken a workshop approach to the development of the report which had allowed critical reflection on the information provided to it by Faculties;
  - ii. as with discussions earlier in the year on the quality and standards of awards taught at UWE, the QMEF forms were not conducive to allowing close examination of the quality and standards.

**AB12.6.9.3** During further discussion the members noted that revisions to the QMEF templates had already been made and this would be accompanied by increased Business Intelligence data being provided to individuals and committees engaged with programme management and enhancement.

**AB12.6.9.4** Academic Board welcomed the report from CPAPC and confirmed that it believed the committee to be appropriately discharging its responsibilities.

**AB12.6.10** **Approval of a new Award**  
*Paper AB12/06/10 was received.*

Academic Board **approved** the creation of the Award of Foundation Certificate with a minimum credit requirement of 80 credits at level 0 to support the development of the international college and enhance the progression opportunities for its students.

**AB12.6.11 Award of Affiliate Institution status**

*Paper AB12/06/11 was received.*

Members **approved** the designation of Alexander College, Cyprus as an Affiliated Institution subject to the Chair of Academic Board confirming at a later date that all conditions agreed by the panel had been met.

**AB12.6.12 Creation of a new differential for an existing Award**

*Paper AB12/06/12 was received.*

Academic Board **approved** the addition of “distinction” as a differential level of award for the Certificate in Education for Life with a requirement that an average of 70% be achieved on 100 credits or more from the modules contributing to the Award.

**AB12.6.13 Approval of a new Field of Study**

*Paper AB12/06/13 was received.*

Members **approved** the creation of the Education in Virtual Worlds field of study.

**AB12.6.14 Annual Reports from Academic Standards and Quality Committees (ASQCs)**

*Paper AB12/06/14 was received.*

Academic Board received the reports and noted that the work of ASQCs together with the issues arising had been extensively discussed at the previous meeting as part of the evaluation of the quality of programmes within each Faculty.

**LEARNING, TEACHING AND STUDENT EXPERIENCE ITEMS**

**AB12.6.15 Assessment offence policy**

*Paper AB12/06/15 was received.*

**AB12.6.15.1** On behalf of the Pro Vice-Chancellor, Learning Teaching and Student Experience and the Plagiarism Working Group, Professor Holland outlined to members that the proposals before them had been created following requests from a number of stakeholders, including External Examiners and Students, for a clear policy on the University’s approach to the assessment offences and that the intention behind them would be to develop increased consistency across the institution.

**AB12.6.15.2** During discussion members:

- i. questioned the rationale behind the proposal to introduce a zero mark in all plagiarism cases, but recognised that subdivisions of penalties created a number of issues and would potentially inhibit the equitable treatment of students across the institution and compromise the viability of the overall proposals;
- ii. noted that there would continue to be scope for colleagues to consider whether the offence simply constituted poor scholarship as opposed to plagiarism which would not require the mark to be reduced to zero;
- iii. considered the rationale of plagiarism committed by level 3/M students and on dissertations being automatically elevated to a serious offence as it could have a detrimental impact on direct entrants. Whilst this was recognised, the view was taken that regardless of the route by which student reached that level of study they should be aware of basic academic discipline;
- iv. noted that the appendix detailing assessment categories and penalties would be published to students.

- AB12.6.15.3** Academic Board **approved** the plagiarism policy subject to:
- i. amendments to appendix a – the term “ghosting” to be changed to “contract cheating”;
  - ii. amendments to appendix c – to reflect that aggravating factors could apply across all categories of offence;
  - iii. guidance being produced for markers on what to do if they suspect an offence has been committed;
  - iv. final proofing of the Policy prior to wider circulation.

**ACTION: Pro Vice-Chancellor, Learning Teaching and Student Experience**

- AB12.6.15.4** Members also requested that a review of the first year’s implementation of the Policy be conducted and presented to Academic Board in due course.

**ACTION: Pro Vice-Chancellor, Learning Teaching and Student Experience/  
Secretary**

- AB12.6.16** **Complaints and appeals report**  
*Paper AB12/06/16 was received.*

- AB12.6.16.1** The Complaints and Appeals Manager informed Academic Board that:
- i. although complaints had fallen slightly from 2009/10 levels the anticipated reduction of appeals as a result of amendments to section F12 of the University’s regulations had not transpired and the number of appeals had in fact increased;
  - ii. common themes across appeals and complaints related to unclear/incorrect information and some Inconsistency of University record keeping. Members noted that the latter was particularly important as the University would be obliged to acquiesce to an appeal or complaint where it could not provide evidence to the contrary;
  - iii. there was an underlying expectation that the level of complaints and appeals would increase further following government attempts to create a market and informed *consumers* within the sector;
  - iv. members seeking further detail on the complaints and appeals within their own area could contact the Complaints and Appeals team for further information;

- AB12.6.16.2** The Pro Vice-Chancellor Partnerships, Diversity and Civic Engagement and Chair of the Appeals Panel, confirmed that the issues explored within in the report were visible at the Appeal Panel, which itself had helped to share learning points.

- AB12.6.16.3** Members thanked the Complaints and Appeals Team for the clear format of the report.

- AB12.6.17** **UWE Compact Agreement**  
*Paper AB1206/17 was received.*

- AB12.6.17.1** The Partnerships Programme Officer briefed members on the compact agreement and noted in particular that;
- i. it provided the same benefits as the heading higher passport which it would replace but also too account of OFFA requirements;
  - ii. those completing the compact scheme would be eligible for additional UCAS points, a guaranteed interview or be invited to provide biographical information as part of their application;
  - iii. through consultation the scheme had developed a number of compulsory modules to promote progression and ensure students on the scheme developed an understanding of good scholarship.

**AB12.6.16.2** Academic Board **approved** the Compact Framework.

## **RESEARCH AND KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE ITEMS**

### **AB12.6.17 University Research Ethics Committee (UREC) annual report**

*Paper AB12/06/18 was received.*

**AB12.6.17.1** The outgoing Chair of UREC introduced the report and thanked colleagues within Research, Business and Innovation for their support in the operation of UREC and its sub committees.

**AB12.6.17.2** Members welcomed the Report and in particular the work undertaken by the committee to identify and act upon areas of weakness, notably:

- i. Human tissue research;
- ii. Research governance;
- iii. Student and staff support;

**AB12.6.17.3** On behalf of Academic Board the Chair thanked Professor Means for his work on the Committee and noted that Members would look forward to seeing the results of work instigated this year to address the areas of weakness identified.

### **AB12.6.18 Research and knowledge exchange update**

During an oral update from the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) members noted that:

- i. the Research Excellence Framework (REF) rehearsal had been completed and had identified that UWE would likely submit slight fewer staff than anticipated, but that the quality threshold would be higher. Further work would also be conducted to refine the impact statements and case studies which were a requirement of the REF;
- ii. the university had had considerable success in securing externally funded research projects despite an increasing competitive environment. At the time of reporting UWE had secured £500,000 more than at the same point in 2011 and had a further £26m of bids under consideration. The most notable successes included:
  - a. an award of £322,000 from the AHRC secured by Professor Hopkins to investigate the application of ancient Egyptian techniques of pigment application to 3D printing;
  - b. £420k awarded to Professor Keily by the European Commission for a Business technology Centre focused on in-vitro testing;
  - c. Four new knowledge transfer partnerships awards in the past month.
- iii. in addition to the research successes UWE had been able to reduce its research subsidy by £8m which brought the institution to a much more sustainable level of investment.

### **AB12.6.19 ITEMS TO NOTE**

*Papers AB12/06/19 - AB12/06/20 were received.*

Members noted the Chair's actions reported since the last meeting together with the report on Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body activity and the minutes of Academic Board sub-committees.

### **AB12.6.20 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

**AB12.6.20.1** Members welcomed an update on the University's Guardian League table position which had increased from 67<sup>th</sup> to 62<sup>nd</sup>.



**AB12.6.20.2** On behalf of the Academic Board the Chair thanked the outgoing Students' Union President for their contribution to the Board and their robust representation of the student voice at the Board.

**AB12.6.21 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

All meetings held 14:00 – 17:00

31 October 2012	Dartington Suite, Frenchay Campus
19 December 2012	Dartington Suite, Frenchay Campus
13 March 2013	Dartington Suite, Frenchay Campus
01 May 2013	Dartington Suite, Frenchay Campus
26 June 2013	<b>3A22, Frenchay Campus</b>