

ACADEMIC BOARD

Minutes of the meeting of the Academic Board held on Wednesday 1 October 2014.

Present: Steve West (Chair), Martin Boddy, JJ Clark, Clayton Davies, John Deane, Paul Dowdall, Benjamin Drew, Manuel Frutos-Perez, Alex Gilkison, Sarah Green, Bernhard Gross, Jane Harrington, Catherine Hobbs, Dylan Jones-Evans, Lynne Lawrance, James Lee, Mandy Lee, Lamine Mahdjoubi, Chris Moore, Steve Neill, Paul Olomolaiye, Glen Parry, Adam Pinfold, Peter Rawlings, Darren Reynolds, Charlie Roper, Jeanette Sakel, Rachel Sales, Aniko Varadi.

In attendance: Gaynor Attwood, Jason Briddon; Rachel Cowie, Jo Midgley, Derek Norris (for T Willis), Alastair Osborn.

Apologies: Jon Dovey, Glenn Lyons, Rosie Scott Ward, Tracy Willis.

AB14.10.1 **Membership and Terms of Reference**
Paper AB14/10/1 was received and noted.

AB14.10.2 **Minutes of the last meeting**
Paper AB14/10/2 was received.

Members approved the minutes of the meeting held on 25 June 2014 subject to a minor amendment to reflect the Vice-President (Education) being present as an observer.

AB14.10.3 **Matters arising**

AB14.10.3.1 Report from Student Voice Working Group (AB14.06.4.2 refers)

The Director of Academic Services noted that a report from the Students' Union (UWESU) identifying issues and reflecting on the previous QAA review had instigated a suite of work in relation to assessment and feedback and that the Vice-President (Education) would be leading a project on student expectations; this would take place alongside an ongoing review of the student representative system at the University. A combined action plan would be presented to the next meeting.

ACTION: Director of Academic Services/Clerk

AB14.10.3.1.1 The Vice-Chancellor reminded colleagues of the importance of the student voice and the need to demonstrate that the University listened and, crucially, acted on student feedback. It would therefore be important for all colleagues to articulate the outcomes of feedback received in meaningful way for students.

AB14.10.3.2 Academic Regulations (AB14.06.10.5 refers)
Paper AB14/10/03 was received.

The Vice-Chancellor welcomed the pilot of the five working day extensions policy. As a consequence of discussion members also noted some of the on-going challenges in relation to online assessment submissions made within seconds of the deadline. To ensure students were not unintentionally disadvantaged work would be undertaken to examine how they might be informed in advance that work could arrive after the deadline had passed.

ACTION: Directors of Academic Services and ITS

AB14.10.3.3 Approaches to survey engagement (AB14.06.9.4 refers)
Members noted that Faculties would be discussing approaches to survey engagement which would be reported back to the next meeting.

AB14.10.3.4 Innovative approaches to Learning and Teaching (AB14.06.6.2 refers)
The Vice-Chancellor noted that Academic Board would look forward to hearing and celebrating the innovations of colleagues across the institution in December.

AB14.10.3.5 Publication of marks and Degree Calculator (AB14.06.10.4 refers)
The Director of Academic Services noted that following discussion in June the approach to the publication of provisional marks would be a substantive item at the next meeting.

ACTION: Director of Academic Services

AB14.10.3.6 Quality Dashboard (AB14.06.18.2)
Members noted the dashboard would be considered again at the next meeting.

ACTION: Clerk

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

AB14.10.4 **Responding to Student Feedback – Professional Standards** *Paper AB14/10/4 was received.*

AB14.10.4.1 The Chair noted the disappointing fall in the national student survey (NSS) results, highlighting that it would be important for the University not to become preoccupied solely by question 22; the individual questions highlighted that there were areas where the University consistently under performed when compared to similar institutions. Feedback remained consistent in these areas and the qualitative feedback highlighted both outstanding and unacceptable practice. Looking ahead Academic Board would need to reflect on the drivers of success and consider how poorer performing programmes could be supported. Members further noted that:

- i. nationally there was a trend of increasing satisfaction as a result of institutions prioritising the student experience; therefore regardless of arguments on validity, the NSS was a proxy for quality and could not be ignored. Some areas, such as assessment feedback, were sector wide issues but even within these there remained headroom between UWE and the sector;
- ii. developing an approach which provided continuous incremental improvement would be imperative in order for changes to be sustained and for the University to keep pace with the sector;
- iii. the proposals on professional standards were not designed as a solution in their own right but instead were intended to instigate a conversation about some of the issues by identifying what were considered to be students' basic expectation.

AB14.10.4.2 The Director of Academic Services highlighted that this year the University was seeking to develop a multi-level approach to enhancement in response to the student voice with programme teams considering feedback as part of the annual reporting cycle, Faculties and Departments considering responses to feedback thematically and high-level University wide actions such as the standards proposed.

AB14.10.4.3 To facilitate discussion the Vice-Chancellor provided an overview of some of the key questions for the University when considering the student experience including whether:

- i. the modular framework fully supported University's practice oriented ambitions and cohort identity?
- ii. timetabling at a student level is sustainable?
- iii. enough had been done to rationalize assessment loads and diets?

[Clerks Note: The slides accompanying the discussion are available on the [Academic Board SharePoint site](#)¹]

- AB14.10.4.4 During an extensive and lively discussion, both in plenary and smaller groups, members considered:
- i. a five fold increase in the number of UWE subjects in the bottom quartile when compared to the sector to be unsatisfactory. This pointed to the need to urgently consider some subject areas and programmes;
 - ii. where poor performing modules could be identified, that it would be imperative to work with, rather than blame, colleagues in order to address the issues;
 - iii. that qualitative comments within the survey suggested that poor provision related to staff not updating lecture materials or discussing topics beyond the content of the slides; it was noted that the proposed standard on the availability of materials on Blackboard may unintentionally encourage this 'roll over' of materials;
 - iv. that equally the professional standards might not go far enough given students' interactions with other organisations which typically respond to queries within twenty four hours;
 - v. that it would be beneficial to seek to interact with a broader group of students that did not typically engage with the institution as close working with students could really make a difference;
 - vi. there to be major issue about the 20 day feedback expectation which appeared to be getting worse. The underlying reasons for this would need to be explored further with students and staff;
 - vii. In order to improve, the academic endeavour would need to be at the heart of the systems and processes the institution developed;
 - viii. empowerment at the individual level would be a strong motivational outcome and could be encouraged by a shift in focus from performance to development;
 - ix. a strong programmatic approach could be considered but may not work across the University's whole portfolio. Similarly staff would benefit from an increased sense of belonging within the Faculty structure, perhaps though developing an increased faculty leadership role for Professors and creating more spaces conducive to informal conversations and networking as had been designed into the new Faculty of Business and Law Building;
 - x. the approach to the management of academic staff would need further consideration with the distinction made as to whether contracts were professional in nature or more prescriptive. Alongside this it would be important to define the reward and progression routes for teaching and learning;
 - xi. that with HE unlikely to be protected from spending cuts in the next parliament, resources challenges were not going to dissipate. As a

¹ See <http://goo.gl/EJuzEi>

result the University would need to continue to develop ways to be more efficient.

- AB14.10.4.5 The Chair thanked Members for their constructive contributions and requested that the feedback be taken forward into Academic Quality and Enhancement Committee discussions on the programmatic detail as well as by management groups as part of the Faculty Planning and Performance Reviews.

ACTION: Chair of AQEC and Pro Vice-Chancellors and Executive Deans.

ITEMS FOR APPROVAL

AB14.10.5 Change to fields of study within the Faculty of Arts, Creative Industries And Education

Paper AB14/10/05 was received.

Members **approved** the new Fields of Study within the Faculty that would see a new Field of 'Cultural Industries' created for the Film Studies/Social Media/Media Culture and Practice modules currently in the Field of Culture and Media Studies with effect from September 2014. In addition two further new Fields would be created from September 2015: Broadcast and Journalism, and Lens and Screen Media.

AB14.10.6 Associate Faculty Proposal for Integrated Masters

Paper AB14/10/06 was received.

- AB14.10.6.1 The Dean of the Associate Faculty outlined that the integrated masters Awards proposed would allow the Faculty to market more attractively to international students and fitted with a growing trend in the market which also supported home students' access to postgraduate study.

- AB14.10.6.2 Members **approved** the creation two new integrated Masters Award titles, MEqSci and MSCo noting that programmes themselves that utilised the Awards would be subject to separate approval.

AB14.10.7 Report to the Board of Governors

Paper AB14/10/07 was received.

Members **approved** the report to the Board of Governors in principle, subject to the addition of increased amounts of quantitative data and the clarification of the reporting lines for collaborative provision committee. The Secretary was requested to re-circulate the amended report for members' information.

ACTION: Clerk

REPORTS

AB14.10.8 Update from UWE Student Representatives

Paper AB14/10/8 was received.

- AB14.10.8.1 The Vice-President (Education) introduced the report and noted in particular that the Students' Union would be hoping to recruit some 1100 student representatives and to increase the training provision available to them.

- AB14.10.8.2 The Vice-Chancellor welcomed an update on the Students' Union preparations for the forthcoming QAA Higher Education Review and highlighted the need for continuity in their engagement as the process would span two academic years.

AB14.10.9 Updates from Faculty Boards

Members noted that timing constraints meant that most Faculty Boards were yet to meet, however:

- i. The Faculty of Business and Law had used their most recent meeting to consider the connectivity between research and teaching and to further discuss the plans for the new Business and Law Building;
- ii. Academic Board welcomed the positive outcome of the recent QAA review of Hartpury College which had resulted in two commended judgments and would further support the College's bid for Taught Degree Awarding Powers. On behalf of Academic Board, the Vice-Chancellor congratulated the College and thanked colleagues across the institution that had contributed to the successful outcome.

AB14.10.10 Vice-Chancellor's report

Paper AB14/10/9 was received and noted.

AB14.10.11 Curriculum Approval Panels (CAPs) 2013/14 Annual Report to Academic Board 13/14.

Paper AB14/10/10 was received.

Members considered the report and noted that by and large CAPs were functioning as planned. However the significant variations between the levels of business being transacted within the four faculties was explored further with the number of 'low impact' changes creating a significant workload for academic and professional service colleagues. It was noted that there may be scope to consider how greater flexibility might be introduced within module specifications to empower routine enhancement whilst minimising red tape.

ACTION: Director of Academic Services

AB14.10.12 Honorary Degree Committee

Paper AB14/10/11 was received and noted.

ITEMS TO NOTE

AB14.10.13 Chairs Actions undertaken since the last meeting

Members noted that, on behalf of Academic Board, the Chair had approved:

- i. Foreign Trade University and International University in Vietnam as affiliated institutions;
- ii. Professor James Holland as Professor Emeritus;
- iii. Alexander College to deliver the UWE LLB(Hons) QLD and the MSc Business Management;
- iv. a new 80 credit Masters module as part of, and the overall PhD Robotics and Autonomous Systems programme developed in collaboration with the University of Bristol;
- v. an additional 20 credit module within HAS to support an NHS bid.

AB14.10.14 Dates of future meetings

All meetings scheduled to be held from 14:00 - 17:00 in the Dartington Suite.

Wednesday 17 December 2014

Wednesday 4 March 2015

Wednesday 20 May 2015
Wednesday 8 July 2015