

## **ACADEMIC BOARD**

Minutes of the meeting of the Academic Board held on Wednesday 25 June 2014.

**Present:** Steve West (Chair), Martin Boddy, Clayton Davies, John Deane, Jon Dovey, Paul Dowdall, Megan Edmunds, Manuel Frutos-Perez, Bernhard Gross, Jane Harrington, Catherine Hobbs, Dylan Jones-Evans, Lynne Lawrance, James Lee, Mandy Lee, Katie McFadden, Julie McLeod, Chris Moore, Paul Olomolaiye, Nicholas O'Regan, Glen Parry, Darren Reynolds, Charlie Roper, Jeanette Sakel, Rachel Sales, Fiona Tolmie, Aniko Varadi, Harry Winsler.

**In attendance:** Rachel Cowie, T Horton (for items AB14.06.10 – 11), Jo Midgley, Alastair Osborn; D Watson (for item AB14.06.15)

**Observers:** J Anstee, M Burrell, JJ Clark, J Costello, T Renhard, G Wilson (also for item AB14.06.8).

**Apologies:** Elizabeth Apap-Bologna, Jason Briddon, Benjamin Drew, Alex Gilkison, Sarah Green Helen Millican, Steven Neill; Adam Pinfold; Gerry Rice, John Rushforth, Rosie Scott Ward. Tommy Van Steen, Tracy Willis.

**AB14.06.1 Welcome from the chair**  
*Paper AB14/06/1 was received and noted.*

**AB14.06.2 Minutes of the last meeting**  
*AB14/05/M was received.*

Members approved the minutes of the meeting held on 21 May 2014.

**AB14.06.3 Matters arising**

Nomenclature for new Departments in ACE Faculty (*Minute AB 14.5.8 refers*)  
Members noted an update from the Chair that work continued with the Faculty and Professional services to ensure the new department names supported by Academic Board in May 2014 could be consistently reflected within physical and IT infrastructures. The use of the term 'schools' was being considered as part of the wider UWE brand discussions.

## **STANDING ITEMS**

**AB14.06.4 Students' Union Report**  
*Paper AB 14/06/2 was received.*

AB14.06.4.1 The Vice-President Education introduced the report outlining that it had been designed to provide a review of the University's progress on the areas highlighted by the student written submission to the QAA review in 2009 and, where necessary provided recommendations for further action. During discussion members:

- i. noted there remained a number of reoccurring themes, progress on which continued to be variable;

- ii. strongly endorsed the plans of some Department Committees to consider Student's Union Action plans alongside their own at the start of the 2014/15 academic year. To ensure innovative actions and practice could be captured and, where appropriate disseminated, the cross-university Student Voice working Group would also look to summarise the Students' Union reports and the responses to them;
- iii. extensively considered the distinction between setting standards for the use of Blackboard and standardisation; the latter would impinge on pedagogic innovation and that instead the navigational approach to developing consistency across the University's virtual learning environment, as developed with in the Faculty of Business and Law (FBL) remained preferable. Members further noted that a project had been established to examine the way the VLE was utilised from the student perspective.
- iv. considered the connectivity between Student Representative/Staff Forums (SRSFs) and Programme Managers who were best place to disseminate feedback to module teams for action.

AB14.06.4.2 The Chair requested that the Student Voice Working Group consider the Students' Union report and develop responses, in the form of an action plan clearly identifying timelines and the colleagues responsible. The plan should also be shaped in order to support the forthcoming Higher Education Review (HER) and progress on the actions would be reported to Academic Board regularly.

**ACTION: Director of Academic Services/UWESU President**

**AB14.06.5 Vice- Chancellor's Report**

*Paper AB14/06/3 was received and noted.*

**AB14.06.6 Feedback from and to Faculty Boards**

*Paper AB14/06/4 was received.*

**AB14.06.6.1** The Chair invited representatives from Faculty Boards to feedback on their work and during discussion members noted:

- i. FBL had begun to consider the future shape of its academic portfolio and the steps necessary in order to support recently graduated students to have access to learning materials on the VLE using the PebblePad platform;
- ii. the Faculty of Health and Applied Sciences had sought to develop its awareness of, and relationships with IT Services and Research and Business Innovation in order to increase support for grant applications;
- iii. the Faculty of Environment and Technology had utilised Faculty Board to consider the impact of un-capped student recruitment on the Faculty's portfolio;
- iv. that the Associate Faculty Board continued to look at the development and support of Technology Enhanced Learning and was also reflecting on the steps necessary in order for the Associate Faculty to achieve the agreed KPI for the proportion of students achieving good honours degrees., a full report of the discussions would be provided to the next meeting of the Committee.

**AB14.06.6.2** *[Clerks note: Building on discussion in May, the Chair has requested that Faculty Boards identify their most innovative learning and teaching practices and choose one to present back to Academic Board at its next meeting.]*

#### **AB14.06.7 Hartpury College transitional arrangements**

Members welcomed an update from the Dean of the Associate Faculty highlighting that:

- i. the College's HER would take place in mid-July. The University continued to support the College through the process with the Pro Vice-Chancellor Learning, Teaching and Student Experience scheduled to attend the review;
- ii. colleagues from the Associate Faculty continued to work with Heads of Professional Services within the University to consider the steps that would be necessary in order to support Hartpury College to achieve Taught Degree Awarding Powers.

#### **ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION**

#### **AB14.06.8 QAA Preparations**

AB14.06.8.1 Members received update from the Institutional Review Project Manager highlighting that:

- i. the QAA was responsible for upholding the quality and standards of higher education in the UK and they discharged their duties by reviewing institutions against the UK Quality Code and the FHEQ;
- ii. UWE's QAA Higher Education Review (HER) would likely take place in late 2015 and encompass the institution's collaborative provision, the scale of which would make UWE high risk in terms of the HER methodology and this would result in a comprehensive visit with a large team;
- iii. although existing policy and process had been designed to meet the expectations within the UK Quality Code, further assurance of the University's alignment with the expectations within the code had been developed through a mapping process. An external consultant had been utilised to consider the University's plans and identify the issues any review would likely focus on whilst a full mock review would be conducted closer to the time;
- iv. the University's preparations were coordinated by a cross university planning group and management board.

AB14.06.8.2 Academic Board welcomed assurances that the preparations for the HER sought to involve the whole institution both in order to disseminate action and draw together illustrative practice that could be presented as part of the evidence base, much of which would already be in existence as a result of existing Quality Monitoring and Enhancement processes.

#### **AB14.06.9 Student Experience Survey (SES)**

*Paper AB14/06/21 was received.*

AB14.06.9.1 The Director of Academic Services highlighted that although the response rate had been disappointingly low at 15% the Student Experience Survey (SES) was one part of the information available to colleagues reflecting on their modules and programmes and, as a result, should be considered alongside outcomes of SRSF meetings, External Examiner Reports and National Student Survey (NSS).

AB14.06.9.2 During discussion Members considered the potential drivers underpinning the low participation rate, noting that:

- i. whilst students appreciated the simplicity of NSS and SES being co-terminus it complicated the message for colleagues promoting participation within lectures and seminars;

- ii. students may not see the relevance of the survey and that by tweaking it to fit with, or derive data from, student module evaluations, timing conflicts would be eased and its significance to students potentially increased;
- iii. the low participation, combined with variable visibility of module feedback meant that the University was unsighted on a significant proportion of the student voice;
- iv. the student Members of Academic Board strongly endorsed the need to “*feed-forward*” action that had been taken in response to feedback so that students understood the significance of survey participation. The Chair reiterated that this remained an expectation, and that space was allowed for within module/programme handbooks and some colleagues utilised Blackboard to communicate actions arising from feedback; however the practice remained highly variable and colleagues should be reminded of its importance.

**ACTION: Pro Vice-Chancellors /Executive Deans.**

AB14.06.9.3 Members also noted that, although caution should be taken in responding to the SES results in isolation, work had begun to investigate the weakening results associated with the Peer Assisted Learning programme.

AB14.06.9.4 The Chair highlighted that the institution would continue to reflect on the consistency of feed-forward and improving the relevance of, and engagement with, the SES which would continue as part of the University’s engagement with the student voice. Academic Board requested that Faculty Boards and ASQCs consider local strategies for engagement and that this form part of their reports to Academic Board and Academic Quality and Enhancement Committee respectively.

**ACTION: Pro Vice-Chancellors / Executive Deans.**

**AB14.06.10 Updated Academic Regulations and Procedures with effect from September 2014**

*Paper AB14/06/5 was received.*

AB14.06.10.1 The Academic Regulatory Framework Review Manager introduced the paper highlighting that, in summary, it was proposed to:

- i. reduce maximum number of credits that could be undertaken in one academic year to, under normal circumstances, 150;
- ii. provide Extenuating Circumstances (EC) panels with flexibility to accept ECs without evidence in exceptional cases;
- iii. introduce a five day extension period in line with many other institutions which would enable students to overcome minor ECs without having to delay assessment for a long period of time.
- iv. further streamline the regulations to cluster pertinent information for students in one place and develop a comprehensive compendium of variant regulations to be published alongside the standard set.

AB14.06.10.2 During thorough and far-reaching discussion members:

- i. noted that the proposals had already been subject to extensive consultation with relevant areas of the University;
- ii. agreed with the Students’ Union President that in-year changes allowed for under the proposals must be clearly communicated to students where they were of a material nature. Similarly the distinction between ECs, the 24 hour window and the proposed extensions would need to be articulated in detail in order to support students and staff;

- iii. received assurances that the proposals would not prevent students submitting ECs in advance of assessments;
- iv. considered it important for External Examiners to receive un-moderated, as well as moderated, work and noted the assessment policy allowed for this;
- v. supported the spirit of the proposed five day extension but expressed significant reservations about the workability of the proposal which could place greater pressure on academic and administrative colleagues. It was noted that in cases where extensions were used the 20 working day turnaround for assessment feedback would apply from the date of submission, not the published deadline. Members further highlighted perceived areas of difficulty for the proposal, in particular its compatibility with online assessment.

AB14.06.10.3 The Chair thanked members for their input and highlighted that other institutions had not experienced the potential impact perceived by members as a result of the introduction of the proposed extensions and by delaying a decision on the proposal UWE risked continuing to disadvantage students.

AB14.06.10.4 In response to a question on the Publication of Marks Policy arising as a result of the erroneous publication of marks within Students' Higher Education Record of Achievements' the Chair requested that a position paper be developed for the next meeting on both the policy and the degree calculator.

**Action: Director of Academic Services**

AB14.06.10.5 Members **approved** all of the regulatory amendments detailed within the paper in full, with the exception of the extension policy which was approved in principle. The Chair requested that further information addressing the concerns and scenarios highlighted by Members be developed and circulated with discussion and final approval conducted electronically over the coming weeks.

**ACTION: Regulatory Review Manager to develop response to Members detailed questions for circulation.**

**AB14.06.11 Review of Extenuating Circumstances Academic Regulations and Procedures**

*Paper AB14/06/6 was received.*

AB14.06.11.1 Members received an update from the Director of Academic Services and noted that the work tied in closely with the wider regulatory review process and needed to be seen in the round of all the changes being made. In response to Students' Union concerns the paper before members articulated "fit to sit" in the UWE context which was premised on allowing the University to identify and support students at the earliest opportunity and expressly noted that individuals not in a position to make an informed choice at the time of assessment would still be able to submit ECs.

AB14.06.11.2 The Vice-President Education noted that the Students' Union's had received a mandate from their AGM not to support the implementation of fit to sit. Members discussed the distinction between the generic understanding of fit to sit and the proposed approach being taken by UWE which, by asking the student the question at the point of submission encouraged them to consider their own position in relation to their studies.

AB14.06.11.3 Academic Board acknowledged the Students' Unions' formal policy position and **agreed** that "fit to sit" be implemented from the 2015/16 academic year requesting that the close consideration to ensuring the accuracy and clarity of information that would be provided to students and staff.

**ACTION: Directors of Academic Services and Student and Partnership Services.**

**AB14.06.12 New Integrated Bachelors/Masters Award Titles**

*Paper AB14/06/7 was received.*

AB14.06.12.1 Members received a briefing from the Associate Dean of the Faculty of Environment and Technology highlighting the desirability of increasing the University's combined Masters portfolio and noted that approval would make the award titles available for Curriculum Approval Panels to consider individual named programmes in line with existing processes.

AB14.06.12.2 Academic Board **approved** the addition of the titles of *MComp*, *MGeog*, *MEnv*, *MMath* to the University Ordinances and Academic Regulations.

**AB14.06.13 Revised Variant Academic Regulations UWE BIC**

*Paper AB14/06/8 was received and approved.*

**AB14.06.14 Proposal to develop a Joint PhD with University of Bristol**

*Paper AB14/06/9 was received.*

Members approved work to develop a Joint Award with the University of Bristol (UoB) to be delivered as part of the Future Autonomous and Robotics Systems Centre of PHD Education and noted that the project would also be subject to UoB's own approval processes.

**AB14.06.15 Programmatic Award Boards and Programme External Examiners**

*Paper AB14/06/10 was received.*

Members **approved** the proposal for the creation of Programmatic Award Boards and Programme External Examiners noting that external drivers were encouraging the university to develop programmatic oversight of the University's modular structure and that:

- i. it is anticipated that some programme external examiners will also have field external examiner duties;
- ii. although in practice it would not fit perfectly within every faculty it would allow the more systematic identification of trends; and
- iii. implementation would be in time for the February 2015 Boards although it was recognised that the implementation plan would prioritise collaborative provision boards occurring earlier and that this would also allow it to be piloted prior to the wider roll-out

**AB14.06.16 PhD Thesis Deposition Arrangements**

*AB14/06/11 was received.*

AB14.06.16.1 The Chair of Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee noted that the proposal had been discussed extensively and commended to Academic Board. During detailed discussion Members considered the implications of all thesis' being published by default immediately on the University's depository, and the interplay between the desire for research to be accessible and the policy of some academic journals not to publish work that had been previously released elsewhere.

AB14.06.16.2 Members **approved** the proposal and requested that students should be able to request an embargo where they sought publication in a journal which prohibited early publishing of work and that a light touch approach should be used when considering evidence required in order for such an embargo to be agreed.

*[Clerk's note: The Vice-Chancellor has subsequently confirmed that the default publishing of PHD Thesis was in line with the expectations of HEFCE, UUK and Research Councils that all PhD Thesis are 'published' in an electronic repository]*

**AB14.06.17 Risk Register**

*AB14/06/12 was received and members were invited to contact the Deputy Clerk to the Board of Governors with queries or comments.*

**AB14.06.18 Quality Dashboard**

*AB14/06/13 was received.*

AB14.06.18.1 Members welcomed the concept and the unified presentation of the data and the comparison it allowed for but highlighted that further thought should be given to the:

- i. identification of the performance of particular demographic groups of students and the illustration of data trends over three or five years;
- ii. the profile (bell-curve) of degree classifications awarded within Faculties;
- iii. providing summary analyses and inferences from the data sets;
- iv. data that could be tracked termly as opposed to annually;
- v. consideration of the links between the data received by Academic Board and that considered by Award Boards with the latter informing the former.

AB14.06.18.2 The Chair requested members provide further feedback to the Deputy Clerk to the Board of Governors off line and that Academic Board be updated on progress at its next meeting.

**ACTION: All**

**AB14.06.19 Timetabling Policy**

*Paper AB14/06/14 was received.*

The revised timetabling policy was **approved** and members:

- i. requested that prior to implementation and publication it be updated to reflect that it applied in "normal circumstances" to recognise that whilst it would be appropriate for the vast majority of the University's provision there would be exceptions;
- ii. emphasised that within the boundaries of the national contract, timetabling should prioritise student experience over staff preferences;
- iii. welcomed assurances that the policy would be kept under annual review.

**AB14.06.20 Religion and Belief Policy**

*Paper AB14/06/15 was received.*

Members welcomed and **approved** the Religion and Belief Policy which built on the Religious Observance Policy considered by Academic Board in June 2013 (minute AB13.06.26 refers) and formed an important part of the institution's fulfilment of its equality duties. Members further requested that a minor amendment be made to reflect that the policy would also apply, where appropriate, to placement arrangements.

**AB14.06.21 Admissions Policy**

*Paper AB14/06/16 was received.*

The Director of Student and Partnership Services highlighted that the revised admissions policy aligned closely with QAA and UKVI expectations and provided more comprehensive information to applicants. Members **approved** the revisions subject to the review of, and where necessary minor amendments, to expectations on violent offenders and tuition fees.

**AB14.06.22 Research and Knowledge Exchange (RKE) Committee**

*Paper AB14/06/17 was received.*

Members thanked the Committee for its report to 31 July 2013 noting that the delay in its presentation had been attributable to the preparations for the Research Excellence Framework (REF) Submission. The Chair of the Committee and Pro Vice-Chancellor: Research and Business Engagement and Director of RBE confirmed that in their opinion the Committee had fulfilled the obligations within the Terms of Reference set by Academic Board.

**AB14.06.23 Academic Quality and Enhancement Committee (AQEC)**

*Paper AB14/06/18 was received.*

Members thanked the PVC Learning, Teaching and Student Experience, and Chair of the Committee for the report and the committee's assurances that it continued to discharge the responsibilities within the Terms of Reference established by Academic Board.

**AB14.06.24 ITEMS TO NOTE**

*Papers AB14/06/19 – 20 were received and members noted:*

**AB14.06.24.1 Academic Board Chair's Action**

- i. approval of the reduction of the resit run length for Masters Dissertation module from a maximum of 12 months to a maximum of 6 months with effect from May 2014;
- ii. The designation of two affiliated institutions:
  - a. Hong Kong Management Association, Hong Kong
  - b. International University, Vietnam.

**AB14.06.24.2 External Peer Review Annual Report**

- iii. Appointments made and how the appropriate discharging of responsibilities within the Academic Regulations on behalf of Academic Board.

**AB14.06.24.3 REF Submission**

- iv. The report of the Submission.

**ANY OTHER BUSINESS****AB14.06.25 Health and Applied Science Fellows**

*Paper AB14/06/22 was received.*

Whilst welcoming the concept of the proposal, Members deferred approval requesting that a cross-university approach to recognising the contribution of external professionals to the University Community be developed.

**AB14.06.26 Business case for the establishment of a new UWE Centre of Excellence: Bristol BioEnergy Centre**  
*Paper AOB was received.*

Academic Board warmly approved the proposal to create a new UWE Centre of Excellence Creation recognising the outstanding profile of the work within the new Centre and its alignment with both regional and national priorities.

**AB14.06.27 Changes to Membership**

- AB14.06.27.1 On behalf of the Board the Chair thanked:
- i. G Rice and Prof Nicholas O'Regan who would be replaced by Prof. P Rawlings and Prof. G Lyons as Associate Dean representatives at next year's board meetings;
  - ii. The Students' Union Vice-President Education, M Edmunds, and H Winsler, K McFadden, E Apap-Bologna and T van Steen for their input as Student Members.

- AB14.06.27.2 Members also placed on record their thanks and best wishes to Prof. McLeod and Mr Rushforth for their extensive and valuable contributions to the work of Academic Board during their time at the University.

**AB14.06.28 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

All meetings scheduled to be held from 14:00 – 17:00 in the Dartington Suite, Wallscourt Farmhouse.

Wednesday 1 October 2014  
Wednesday 17 December 2014  
Wednesday 4 March 2015  
Wednesday 20 May 2015  
Wednesday 8 July 2015