

ACADEMIC BOARD

Minutes of the meeting of the Academic Board held on Wednesday 4 March 2015.

Present: Steve West (Chair), Martin Boddy, Noel Burchell, JJ Clark, Lauren Conen, Clayton Davies, Benjamin Drew, Arwa Flemban, Alex Gilkison, Sarah Green, Bernhard Gross, Jane Harrington, Catherine Hobbs, Lynne Lawrence, James Lee, Mandy Lee, Chris Moore, Steven Neill, Paul Olomolaiye, Callan Powers, Peter Rawlings, Darren Reynolds, Charlie Roper, Jeanette Sakel, Aniko Varadi, Helen Wildman.

In attendance: Rachel Cowie, Lucy Dumbell, Katie Jenkins, Alastair Osborn (Secretary) Tracy Willis.

Apologies: Jason Briddon, John Clarke, John Deane, Jon Dovey, Paul Dowdall, Manuel Frutos-Perez, Theda Hlaing, Dylan Jones-Evans, Glenn Lyons, Lamine Mahdjoubi, Jo Midgley, Glen Parry, Adam Pinfold, Rachel Sales, Rosie Scott-Ward.

AB15.3.1 Membership

The Chair welcomed Awa Flemban and Helen Wildman to their first meeting of Academic Board.

AB15.3.2 Minutes and matters arising

Paper AB15/03/1 was received.

AB15.3.2.1 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 December 2014 were approved.

AB15.3.2.2 Student Voice Working Group

Members noted the Group was working on a project with Faculty colleagues and the Students' Union in order to reflect, and develop recommendations, on the collection of student feedback.

AB15.3.2.3 Visiting titles

The Chair outlined that work continued to establish the advisory board and the titles awarded. Academic Board would be provided with a full update on the arrangements and titles awarded later in the year.

ACTION: Vice-Chancellor/Secretary.

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

AB15.3.3 UWE Bristol Strategy 2020

Paper AB15/03/2 was received.

AB15.3.3.1 The Chair highlighted that the paper provided to members had also been used to work with the Board of Governors on the strategy which had, in its development, benefited from significant staff input. The strategy sought to ensure that the University was known as the best university for:

- i. professionally recognised and practice-oriented programmes;
- ii. connecting and working with our local and regional economy, businesses and communities, and international partners;
- iii. being digitally advanced, agile and responsive; and
- iv. being inclusive and global in outlook and approach.

- AB15.3.3.2 The strategy established four priority areas:
- i. Outstanding Learning
 - ii. Ready and able graduates;
 - iii. Research with impact; and
 - iv. Strategic Partnerships Connections and networks

These were supported by two enablers:

- i. People: Performance and Development; and
- ii. Place: Estates, Infrastructure, Facilities.

These would support differentiation and ensure that the University could attract and support students. Whilst business as usual and incremental enhancement remained essential, in order for the University to succeed there would need to be a transformational level of change in each of the priority areas; engaging with staff and students would be critical and Academic Board would have an important role in informing the approach taken and developing support across the institution.

- AB15.3.3.3 The Deputy Vice-Chancellor highlighted that it would be important for the University and Academic Board to drive the direction within a number of the priority areas and that in order to do, it would be important to explore the principles that could then be applied within Faculties and Departments. Within the outstanding learning theme the principles emerging through discussion were:

- i. Engaged teaching and passionate lecturers.
- ii. Innovative Learning strategies and spaces.
- iii. Relevant and engaging assessment strategies.
- iv. Coherent student communities enhancing the learning experience.
- v. Engagement with the external world throughout the programme.
- vi. Both a practice and scholarly focus throughout all programmes.

- AB15.3.3.4 Members were split into groups to discuss the priorities and subsequently provided initial thoughts including:

- i. as written, students appeared to be passive rather than partners in the process;
- ii. the need to contextualise the principles in order to articulate them to both academic and professional service staff;
- iii. a desire to recognise that innovation could legitimately include failure and that as a result a level of flexibility would be required;
- iv. that it would be important to reflect into the People: Performance and Development enabling work stream that colleagues would need the time and space to deliver against the principles.

- AB15.3.3.4 The Chair thanked Academic Board for their engagement in the discussion and that feedback would be taken forwards. Members would be invited to contribute throughout the process.

AB15.3.4 Interim report on the five working day extensions pilot

Paper AB15/03/3 was received.

- AB15.3.4.1 The Academic Regulatory Framework Manager provided an update to Academic Board noting that:

- i. students that had made use of the pilot had reported they had found the policy supportive and helpful;
- ii. of the 126 applications 67 per cent had been successful and of the successful applications, 91 per cent had submitted their work which would potentially remove the need for them to have a resit attempt;
- iii. academic colleagues had provided feedback on the communication and

- timescales associated with the process; there was also an emerging question as to whether the evidence requirements were hampering application;
- iv. planned IT development would seek to put the process online should it be decided to implement the policy on a permanent basis.
 - v. Further guidance from Academic Board would be sought on the development of the policy in relation to:
 - a. Accessibility of the system to students;
 - b. The range of assessments included in the policy;
 - c. Possible expansion of the eligible criteria to include students becoming victims of crime or other factors beyond their control;
 - d. the timeliness of evidence required; and
 - e. the inclusion of partners.

AB15.3.4.2 Members welcomed the success of the pilot and requested that the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) lead a task and finish group to consider the further development of the policy and report their findings back to Academic Quality and Enhancement Committee (AQEC)¹. The task and finish group would be tasked to consider the consequences of extensions, implementation of the pilot, a communication strategy and how it could be universally applied to UWE students wherever they study.

AB15.3.4.3 The Chair noted that it would be important to ensure that students were not disadvantaged or advantaged and that the assessment experience remained comparable. He requested a report be provided to the July 2015 meeting of Academic Board.

ACTION: Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)

AB15.3.5 Academic Performance Indicators
Paper AB15/03/4 was received.

AB15.3.5.1 The Chair highlighted that the Departmental Scorecards were designed to support teams, understand performance and could be interrogated down to programme level. Given a core responsibility of Academic Board was to assure the University and the Board of Governors of the quality and standards of Awards made in the University's name it would be important for members to review data such as the scorecards alongside the qualitative reports received from Faculties.

AB15.3.5.2 During discussion members noted that:

- i. work had already begun to explore how the institution shared good practice and what the trigger points should be for intervention;
- ii. the scorecards were useful sources of management information for Heads of Department and significant improvements had been made in the quality of data provided;
- iii. from an institutional perspective it would be important for Academic Board to understand the variations in performance;
- iv. whilst internal comparison was useful, it would be important to consider external benchmarks too. This was particularly the case at programme level where meaningful comparisons could be made. At that level there was also a need to correlate the information with other sources such as module evaluation and ensure it could be used to inform portfolio

¹ See also minute Ref AB15.3.15

management.

- AB15.3.5.3 Recognising the project being led by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) on achieving the University learning and teaching ambitions. Members requested that performance measures be built into the project at an early stage and tested with Academic Board as thinking developed.

ACTION: Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic)

ITEMS FOR APPROVAL

AB15.3.6 Introduction of new integrated Bachelors/Masters awards

Papers AB15/03/05-6 were received.

- AB15.3.6.1 Members welcomed and approved the introduction of two new integrated Bachelors/Masters Awards proposed by the Faculties of Health and Applied Sciences and Environment and Technology respectively:
- i. Master of Science (MSci); and
 - ii. Master of Design (MDes).
- AB15.3.6.2 During the discussion members noted that:
- i. the Awards could be utilised by any Faculty;
 - ii. their popularity would likely be subject to government policy on taught postgraduate funding.

It would be crucial to be clear in published information about the differences between the new awards and existing study opportunities.

AB15.3.7 UWE Graduate Attributes

Paper AB15/03/7 was received.

- AB15.3.7.1 Members discussed the UWE Graduate attributes that had been endorsed to Academic Board by AQEC. Whilst it was recognised that the attributes would constitute the start of a journey of work to ensure they were not perceived as a 'bolt on' members raised a number of concerns over their purpose, benefits and measurement.
- AB15.3.7.2 Members further noted that it remained useful to define the attributes that typify a UWE graduate to support students to identify and articulate their learning and experiences whilst studying with the University. However the descriptors were felt to be unnecessarily verbose and that a more focused message may be desirable.
- AB15.3.7.3 Accordingly Academic Board declined to approve the UWE Graduate attributes and requested that the Chair give further thought to their development.

ACTION: Vice-Chancellor [Complete]

- AB15.3.7.4 *Following the meeting the Chair subsequently approved shortened graduate attributes as:*
- i. *Self-reliant and connected.*
 - ii. *Ready and able.*
 - iii. *Enterprising.*
 - iv. *Globally responsible.*
 - v. *Future-facing.*

A small group, led by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and involving the Associate Deans had been convened to consider how the detail behind the headings would be used, communicated and implemented. The group would report to AQEC².

REPORTS AND UPDATES

AB15.3.8 Students' Union Report

Paper AB15/03/8 was received.

- AB15.3.8.1 Academic Board received an update from the Vice-President (Education) highlighting the extensive training programme for student representatives which has seen a 65 per cent increase from student representatives and that the Students' Union's work looking at the Academic Personal Tutor scheme had been fed back to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) for inclusion as part of their work on Outstanding Learning within the institution; a joint workshop on the topic would also be run in due course.
- AB15.3.8.2 Members also warmly welcomed the 350 nominations that had been received for the Student Rep and Student Led Teaching Awards and noted the success of Student Rep Conference.
- AB15.3.8.3 The Vice-President (Education) also highlighted that there had been reports of compatibility issues between the Office 365 software available to students and that used by staff. Members noted staff would move to the 365 platform and suggested this be discussed with IT services.

AB15.3.9 Update on QAA Higher Education Review Preparations

Paper AB15/03/9 was received.

- AB15.3.9.1 The Director of Academic Services noted the workshops informing the preparation of the self evaluation document (SED) were proving highly effective and colleagues would be especially welcome to attend scheduled sessions on teaching and assessment.
- AB15.3.9.2 A draft SED would be submitted to the trial review, conducted by qualified QAA reviewers, scheduled to take place in April. Academic Board would be apprised of the outcomes of the trial review and areas of focus in the run up to the submission in July.

AB15.3.10 Updates from Faculty Boards

- AB15.3.10.1 Members noted that:
- i. the Faculty of Health and Applied Sciences continued to develop an approach that utilised their Faculty Board as a mechanism to draw together outcomes of departmental forums, supporting communication and cross pollination of ideas;
 - ii. the most recent Arts, Creative Industries and Education Faculty Board had focused on the results of the Research Excellence Framework and the Faculty's strategy given the, at best, expectation of flat cash funding;
 - iii. Hartpury College Faculty Board continued to support their application for Taught Degree Awarding Powers and had also evaluated recent successful taster sessions for potential applicants and their parents;
 - iv. The Faculty of Environment and Technology had utilised their Board to reflect on poor module evaluation response rates and how non-engagement in group work by students could be addressed.
- AB15.3.10.2 The Chair welcomed the updates and requested that Faculty Boards develop written briefs, highlighting areas for Academic Board attention in the future.

ACTION: Faculty Board Chairs.

ITEMS TO NOTE

AB15.3.11 Minutes of sub-committees

Members noted the availability of subcommittee minutes on the Academic Board SharePoint site.

AB15.3.12 Dates of future meetings

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

Wednesday 20 May 2015

Wednesday 8 July 2015

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

AB15.3.13 Review of the Academic Quality and Enhancement Committee

Paper AB15/03/AOB was received.

Academic Board **approved** proposals from the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) to more closely align the committee with the Learning and Research 2020 strategic programme. The changes would be with immediate effect and impact on the terms of reference, composition and that it would become the Learning Teaching and Student Experience Committee.