



University of the
West of England

ACADEMIC BOARD

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 22 FEBRUARY 2006

Present: Sir H Newby (chair), C Augousti, Prof A Bensted, Prof M Boddy, Prof G Channon, N Clough, Prof R Cuthbert, Dr K Foreman, M Frutos-Perez, Prof P Gough, C Hill, L Jones, W Jones, Dr R Lawton, Dr S Newby, E Newman, Dr D Reynolds, C Rex, Prof R Ritchie, J Rushforth, R Stroud, Dr J Vinney, T Westcott, Prof A Winfield.

Apologies: Dr A Beckett, J Bradley, Prof C Fudge, A Hill, S Keeble, Prof M Lister, J Lydon.

In attendance: T J Harrison, G Mann, McLaughlin, R Means, P Williams

MEMBERSHIP

AB.06.1.1 The Board welcomed Sir Howard Newby and John Rushforth as members to their first meeting of the Board.

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 23 NOVEMBER 2005

AB.06.1.2 The Board confirmed the minutes of the meeting of 23 November 2005 subject to the following amendment:

- (i) **Min 05.5.20** Amend to read "... verify key information about IKSUR's suitability to design, deliver, assess and evaluate the designated UWE award (i.e. the MA in English Language **Teaching**) ...

ANNUAL REPORT TO THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS ON ACADEMIC BOARD'S ACTIVITIES DURING 2004/2005

AB.06.1.3 Paper AB/06/11 was received and formally endorsed.

VICE CHANCELLOR'S REPORT

AB.06.1.4 The Vice Chancellor referred to the series of presentations he had held across the University at which he had set out his analysis of UWE's current position and his vision for the University's future. He had embarked on a round of visits to faculties, services and UWESU, the outcomes of which would be used to inform the strategic planning process.

AB.06.1.5 Sir Howard informed members that the review of Academic Board initiated as part of the portfolio of strategic reviews was moving forward and that a number of issues were currently under consideration including: the relationship of Academic Board to the Board of Governors, how the relationship between Academic Board, its sub-committees, including faculty boards and examination boards might be rejuvenated to ensure greater clarity of purpose at all levels. The primary role of Academic Board was

recognised as being the guardian of the University's academic standards and as such there needed to be greater clarity about, and confidence in, the Board's ability to exercise this responsibility through effective delegation.

AB.06.1.6 It was agreed that the main item of business at the meeting of the Board in April should be a discussion of the proposals arising from the review. It was suggested that consultation with faculty boards could take place during the intervening period and faculty board chairs were invited to undertake this and to report to the Academic Registry.

AB.06.1.7 Members were informed that the National Student Survey was currently underway and that the response rate had reached 9.8% in the first two weeks of the survey. Faculty Deans were exhorted to ensure that faculty staff reminded students of the importance of completing the survey. A further report would be made to the next meeting of the Board.

PLANNING ROUND 2005/2006

AB.06.1.8 The Deputy Vice Chancellor (Resources) reminded members that the 2005/2006 planning round had begun in November with the development of a strategic planning framework. A series of meetings had been held with each faculty and service to review their planning statements. The budget round would start imminently. The University now had available a rich seam of information arising from the planning round and the strategic reviews with which to develop the institutional strategic plan. A presentation would be made to Deans and Heads of Services setting out the main institutional priorities and timetable of action.

AB.06.1.9 Future planning cycles would be brought forward with the creation of a three year time-frame within which performance can be measured against longer term strategic objectives. The need for a transparent resource allocation model was noted as being of critical importance to better enable strategic decisions to be taken across the University against an agreed set of institutional priorities.

REPORTS FROM SUB COMMITTEES

Academic Quality and Audit Committee

Paper AB/06/1/2 was received.

AB.06.1.10 The Board received and agreed to approve the annual report of the activities of AQAC during 2004/05. The Board noted that the University would shortly be required to submit a one year on response to the outcomes of the QAA Institutional Audit.

STUDENT MATTERS

Paper AB/06/1/3 was received.

AB.06.1.11 The Board received a report from the UWESU Student Representative Council (SRC) on its current activities and priorities. Members were informed that the Union's new constitution had come into operation on 1 August 2005 within which provision had been made for a Student Representative Council (SRC). The SRC consisted of 40 elected student representatives from each of the University's faculties and two elected officers. The role of the SRC was to canvass student opinion on educational issues that impacted on students across the institution. The report set out the main issues that had been identified to date. It was

suggested that the SRC had an additional important role in identifying best practice across the institution as well as identifying issues, and the Board looked forward to receiving further information in future.

AB.06.1.12 The Union was invited to consider how part-time students might be represented by the SRC.

AB.06.1.13 The Union was thanked for the report which raised issues of very direct concern to students, many of which were being directly addressed by the strategic reviews. The importance of enabling an ongoing dialogue between the Board and the Union on these matters was acknowledged.

REPORT FROM FACULTY BOARD CHAIRS

AB.06.1.14 Members were advised that the Faculty Board Chairs had welcomed the opportunity to discuss the relationship between the Board and Faculty Boards at the earlier meeting with the Vice-Chancellor and that they had been encouraged by the comments made in relation to strengthening the role of Faculty Boards.

HONORARY DEGREES

Paper AB/06/1/4 was received.

AB.06.1.15 The Vice Chancellor reported that at a recent meeting of the Honorary Degrees Committee. A number of issues regarding the nomination process had been identified. The role of the Board in receiving and approving honorary degree nominations would be considered as part of the review of the Board.

QUALITY ASSURANCE MATTERS

QAA Major Health Review

Paper AB/06/1/5 was received.

AB.06.1.16 The Board was informed that the draft report of the QAA Major Health Review had been received and congratulated the faculty on an outstanding performance. The faculty was currently working on the resultant action plan which would be signed off and brought to the Board at its next meeting.

QAA Postgraduate Review

Paper AB/06/1/6 was received.

AB.06.1.17 Professor Robin Means attended the meeting. Members were reminded that the QAA was undertaking a desk based review of institutions' compliance with its code of practice on postgraduate research students. The outcome of the review would be received in April/May. Professor Steven Hoddell had been invited to take part in the review in light of his considerable achievements in developing the University's approach to, and portfolio of, postgraduate research provision which had enabled the University to approach the review from a position of strength. Professor Means expressed his thanks to members of the project board and to staff from the Academic Registry and CRIGS for their involvement in preparing

the submission.

- AB.06.1.18 The postgraduate research context was changing fast and was becoming increasingly codified and measured against national benchmarks. The expectations in respect of research training skills were considerably different now than they had been in the future notably the expectation that these would not be delivered by individual supervisors alone.
- AB.06.1.19 Members thanked Professor Means and the project board for the clarity of the review submission and looked forward to the outcomes later in the year. The challenges posed by the changing postgraduate research context for the University, faculties and individual members of staff on how the research student experience was supported and managed should not be underestimated.
- AB.06.1.20 It had been apparent in the current planning round that faculties were evidently maturing in their strategic approach to postgraduate research provision. The impact of faculty Graduate Schools would need to be reviewed particularly in terms of the opportunities provided to work across disciplines but also to enable students to meet with other graduate students as part of a wider cohort.

QAA Consultation on Revised Methodology for Institutional Audit

- AB.06.1.21 Paper AB/06/1/7 was received.

RESEARCH MATTERS

RAE 2008

- AB.06.1.22 The Vice Chancellor reported that a mock RAE exercise had been conducted and the outcomes reviewed by various assessors. The exercise had revealed a significant degree of variability across the University in respect of the 'raw material' underpinning the RAE and the proposed tactical decisions about how to manage the exercise. The next RAE would be notably different from the previous exercise in terms of its methodology. The institutional mind-set would therefore need to change to acknowledge this particularly in respect of the wider range of out-put that would be given weight in the new methodology despite a degree of nervousness across the sector about whether panels were genuinely encouraging a more inclusive approach to outputs.
- AB.06.1.23 The funding council would not reveal its funding formula exercise in the light of the spending review and general election. The key strategic issue for all universities would be balancing the trade off between income maximisation against reputational risk which necessarily introduced the concept of selectivity and the effect this would naturally have on developing a more selective approach to research.
- AB.06.1.24 The Vice-Chancellor's view was that the 2008 research criteria could be of considerable advantage to the University and that they could enable more explicitly individual areas of excellence to shine than had previously the case. The debate would need to take place at the Board about the institutional research and RAE strategy.

Knowledge Transfer

- AB.06.1.25 The Vice Chancellor set out his vision for an institutional knowledge transfer

agenda. He proposed an analysis of knowledge transfer that had as its starting place a linear model by which laboratory discoveries were transferred to the market place and which had led to the UK having the reputation of having excellent invention but poor enterprise, to a knowledge transfer agenda which was typified by the Sony Walkman experience which had related the market need back to the research base (i.e. no new science or technology had been involved in its creation). The UK economy was becoming increasingly service based and the process of knowledge transfer, or exchange, could no longer be seen as one way but about people and the partnerships/networks with which they were involved. Understood this way, therefore, knowledge transfer explicitly underpinned lifelong learning.

AB.06.1.26 The University's strengths were in its engagement with professional practice which meant that it was in a strong place to support CPD and the lifelong learning journey whereby people went back and forth between the University and industry refreshing both theirs and the University's knowledge base and in turn applying the knowledge learned when they returned to the workplace. The Vice Chancellor's view was that knowledge transfer was already well embedded in much of the University's provision but that it needed to be more focused to enable maximisation of the CPD opportunities. The University, in his view, could excel at this and it would align with a widening participation strategy that actively supported new entrants to higher education through workplace experience.

AB.06.1.27 The Vice Chancellor was keen to reassure members that the knowledge transfer agenda was not concerned with removing research from the University's portfolio. The institutional research strategy and approach to the RAE would be central to the knowledge transfer agenda which was ultimately concerned with providing greater clarity about UWE's distinctive mission as a teaching and research institution. The inherent difficulties in measuring the impact of the knowledge transfer agenda were recognised and there would need to be an ongoing debate about, and engagement with, this across the institution from hereon in.

TEACHING AND LEARNING MATTERS

Widening Participation Strategy

AB.06.1.28 The Vice Chancellor reminded members that the sector was moving rapidly from a widening participation agenda to one concerned with diversity. Legal obligations existed to ensure the University monitored its equal opportunities practice and that it actively promoted race equality. It was recognised that UWE needed to improve its position in light of its systematically below benchmark performance. Targets would be set and agreed across the University as part of the current planning round. Failure to meet the agreed targets would result in budgets being withheld.

RECENT CONSULTATION PAPERS

AB.06.1.29 The Board was invited to consider ways in which access to the increasing number of consultation/information documents might be facilitated to better enable more careful identification of those with which the University should engage and/or respond.

DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS IN 2006

AB.06.1.30 27 April, 8 June.