



University of the  
West of England

## **ACADEMIC BOARD**

### **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 26 APRIL 2006**

**Present:** Sir H Newby (chair); C Agousti; Dr A Beckett, Prof. M Boddy, J Bradley, Prof. G Channon, N Clough, Prof. R E Cuthbert, Prof. J Duffield, M Frutos-Perez, Prof. C Fudge, W Jones, S Keeble, M Keppel-Palmer, Dr R Lawton, Prof. M Lister, Dr Newby, E Newman, A Osborn, V Patel, C Rex, Prof. R Ritchie, J Rushforth, R Stroud, Dr J Vinney, T Westcott, Prof. A Winfield.

**In attendance:** T Harrison, A Hill, W Hopkins, K Owen-Jones

**Apologies:** Prof. A Bensted, Prof. P Gough, Dr K Foreman, L Jones, D Reynolds, Prof. S West.

**In attendance:** T J Harrison

## **MEMBERSHIP**

### **MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 23 NOVEMBER 2005**

AB.06.2.1 The Board confirmed the minutes of the meeting of 22 November 2006.

## **VICE CHANCELLOR'S REPORT**

AB.06.2.2 Strategic Reviews

The Vice Chancellor reported on progress with the strategic reviews that had been instigated by him prior to his appointment. The review of nursery provision had been taken forward for further development; the review of academic board would be discussed later in the meeting; the review of governance would begin shortly with the Board of Governors. The remaining reviews had been integrated into two implementation projects – Academic Portfolio and Student Experience, both of which were required to report by the end of May. A full report would be made to the next meeting of the committee.

**Action: Secretary to bring forward**

AB.06.2.3 Governors' Away Day

The Vice Chancellor reported that the governors would be holding an away day on 3<sup>rd</sup> May at which a number of issues regarding enhancing their engagement with their role of accountability and overall responsibility.

AB.06.2.4 Student Death

The Vice Chancellor reported the very sad news of the death of a student – William Blick. William had been representing the University at a snowboarding championship in France over the Easter vacation. The Vice Chancellor paid tribute to university staff who had been involved in handling the incident, particularly Gatehouse staff who were the first to respond. The

Vice Chancellor would be attending the funeral.

AB.06.2.5 The Vice Chancellor noted that the University's procedures for health and safety and for emergency cover would be reviewed as a result of the incidence to identify any institutional learning.

AB.06.2.6 Industrial Action

The Vice Chancellor reported on the continuing industrial action being taken by AUT and NATFHE. The action being taken was in the form of a boycott of assessment. The UMG was keeping a close brief on the impact of the action and was working closely with the Students' Union in this regard. He stressed that this was a national dispute that would require a national resolution. Non teaching unions had called off their proposed strike and had entered discussions with employers.

AB.06.2.7 The SRC President reaffirmed the importance of communicating with students about the University's position and brought to the Board's attention concerns about instances of students had reported allegedly being intimidated by staff over the action. The Vice Chancellor requested that any such incidences be reported to the UMG in the first instance.

#### **ACADEMIC QUALITY AND AUDIT COMMITTEE**

AB.06.2.8 Proposal for the introduction of a new award title Professional Graduate Certificate in Education from September 2006.

Paper AB/06/2/1 was received.

AB.06.2.9 Professor Ritchie introduced a proposal for the introduction from September 2006 of a new award title – Professional Graduate Certificate in Education – noting that the proposal reflected sector wide changes in education. The proposed change would affect the cohort of students entering in September 2007 and would provide an alternative award for those students who were able to meet the standards required for QTS in schools but who were unable to achieve sufficient credit at level M for the award of the Postgraduate Certificate in Education.

AB.06.2.10 The Board agreed to recommend approval of the proposal to the Board of Governors.

**Action: Secretary/Clerk to the Board of Governors**

#### **SUB-COMMITTEE FOR SUPERVISED POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH STUDY**

AB.06.2.11 MPhil Descriptor  
Paper AB/06/2/2 was received.

AB.06.2.12 Wendy Hopkins (Academic Registry) introduced a proposal for a descriptor for the award of MPhil following extensive consultation across the institution. The Board was reminded that it had approved the UWE doctoral descriptor in 2003 as part of an amplified regulatory framework to cover the expanding range of doctoral degrees offered by the University.

AB.06.2.13 The Board agreed to approve the descriptor subject to further work being undertaken on further differentiating the criteria to reflect those MPhil awards that were in effect two year programmes with minimal transfer to PhD and those that might be perceived as compensation for a failed PhD.

**Action: Academic Registry**

- AB.06.2.14 Research Degrees Examining Board  
Paper AB/06/2/3 was received.
- AB.06.2.15 The Board agreed to recommend approval of proposed regulations and procedures to underpin the research degree examining board. The regulations had been developed by SPRS and the Research Committee.

**Action: Secretary/Clerk to the Board of Governors**

### **GERMAN TEACHING**

- AB.06.2.16 Paper AB/06/2/3 was received.
- AB.06.2.17 The Dean of HLSS introduced a proposal to close intakes to the undergraduate half award in German from 2006/2007. The Board received reassurance that current students on the award would be fully supported throughout the remainder of their programme and that there would be no compulsory staff redundancies as a result of the proposal. Professor Channon stressed the importance of German at MA level and as part of the University's ILP... The proposal had resulted from significant concerns within the faculty about the resources available to sustain the undergraduate programme and to address impending staffing issues which had provided the faculty with an opportunity to refocus its provision.
- AB.06.2.18 A number of members commented on their regret at the proposal but received reassurances from Professor Channon that it reflected the closure of a way of delivering German but not that German was being closed.
- AB.06.2.19 The Committee agreed to recommend approval of the proposal to the Board of Governors.

**Action: Secretary/Clerk to the Board of Governors**

### **STUDENT MATTERS**

- AB.06.2.20 The UWESU SRC President reported that at its last meeting the Student Representative Council had passed a number of motions in respect of a number of areas of the student experience, many of which were being addressed via the VC's Strategic Reviews. She reported that the agenda being set by the SRC was further evidence of the success of the union's new processes.
- AB.06.2.21 The Committee agreed to refer the SRC report to the next joint meeting of TLAC/AQAC with the aim of inviting that group to ensure that issues were being followed through and that duplication of effort was avoided.

**Action: Secretary**

### **QUALITY ASSURANCE MATTERS**

- AB.06.2.22 **QAA Institutional Audit**  
The Committee was informed that the QAA had recently confirmed that the University's next Institutional Audit would take place during the Spring Term 2009. Further information about a proposed date for the University's 'interim review' would be confirmed at a later date once the QAA had received and considered responses to its recent consultation paper.

### **REVIEW OF THE ACADEMIC BOARD COMMITTEE STRUCTURE AND ITS ROLE IN THE GOVERNANCE OF THE UNIVERSITY**

- AB.06.2.23 The Vice Chancellor reported that the review of Academic Board had begun in September 2005 and that a review of governance was also underway. He reminded members that any decision made in respect of the Board's arrangements would need to be formally recommended to the Board of Governors. The proposals had been discussed by the UMG at a meeting earlier in the week at which a number of amendments had been made to the papers circulated to the Board.
- AB.06.2.24 The original review of Academic Board had concluded that the irreducible function of the Board was to uphold the University's academic standards and that the focus of attention should therefore be on:
- AB.06.2.25 (a) whether Academic Board was able to discharge its role effectively – the review had concluded that the Board was properly constituted to discharge its responsibilities and therefore no changes were proposed to the constitution
- AB.06.2.26 (b) the balance between the central Academic Board activities and those of its sub-committees. Academic Board's role was to scrutinise across faculties and this raised questions regarding whether faculty boards were properly constituted to exercise their responsibilities in an increasingly devolved committee structure
- AB.06.2.27 (c) whether the decision making process was effective and efficient and how to reduce duplication and the multitude of sub groups and committees that had developed over time whilst retaining the principles of collegiality and accountability.
- AB.06.2.28 The Vice Chancellor stressed that the aim of the proposals was to reinvigorate Academic Board and Faculty Boards so that agendas were set in a way that engendered meaningful, informed and rigorous debate at all levels within the institution. The Vice Chancellor explained that he expected the proposed structure to enable both the Academic Board and the Board of Governors to hold him to account.
- AB.06.2.29 Members were presented with a proposed organogram showing the relationship of Academic Board to the Board of Governors, to Faculty Boards and to its other sub committees. The Vice Chancellor noted that the newly created Policy and Resources Committee (PRC) – a joint committee of the Board of Governors and the Academic Board which would be the means by which the Board of Governors role in determining university policy and resourcing would receive information to enable them to discharge their responsibility. The PRC would have responsibility for making recommendations to both Academic Board and the Board of Governors in respect of resource allocation, financial planning, the scrutiny and monitoring of the University's strategic plan and the University's planning function. The PRC would be the committee in which monitoring of the University's activities against agreed objectives would take place. The PRC was not a formal decision making body although it was likely to have delegated authority in some areas. A number of sub-committees of PRC would need to be considered and further discussions would take place with governors in this respect.
- AB.06.2.30 The Vice Chancellor noted that primary responsibility for quality assurance would increasingly be delegated to faculties with university level committees retaining responsibility for scrutiny across the institution. The proposals therefore recommended the integration of examination boards with faculty boards.

- AB.06.2.31 The Vice Chancellor pointed out that it was his firmly held view that students should, as a matter of principle, be represented on all committees and that this had been reflected in the proposals. Reserved business items on agendas would ensure that students were required to leave at appropriate points during meetings to enable confidential matters to be discussed.
- AB.06.2.32 The Vice Chancellor reported that further work was underway to develop 'dummy' agendas and a detailed timetable of meetings, both of which would be brought to the next meeting for discussion.
- AB.06.2.33 The President of UWESU SRC welcomed the proposals both in relation to increased student representation and the closer links with the Board of Governors.
- AB.06.2.34 During discussion of the proposals the following comments were received:
- AB.06.2.35 (a) that the proposals indicated a move towards a sharper decision making process with increased focus on institutional priorities and closer links between Academic Board and the Board of Governors
- AB.06.2.36 (b) that the new Faculty Boards were likely to be different fora to the current arrangements, particularly with the removal of Faculty Board Chairs. It was suggested that faculties might consider the introduction of a Faculty Forum to ensure that the wider faculty membership could be consulted on matters of faculty and institutional concern. It was further suggested that the majority of Faculty Board members should be elected members
- AB.06.2.37 (c) the need to recognise that decisions would need to be taken in between formal meetings of committee
- AB.06.2.38 (d) the clarity provided by the new structure would need to be preserved as discussions about implementation began so that the up and down flow of information and communication was properly supported
- AB.06.2.39 During discussion of the individual committees the following comments were received:
- AB.06.2.40 Academic Board
- AB.06.2.41 (a) pending the outcome of discussions regarding the number of faculties in the future it was suggested the current maximum membership of 40 (20/20 split between executive and non-executive) determined by the Articles was unlikely to be amended
- AB.06.2.42 (b) clarity around nomenclature would be helpful (e.g. module, course etc.)
- AB.06.2.43 Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee
- AB.06.2.44 a) thought would need to be given to how the co-options would work to ensure appropriate expertise was made available to the committee
- AB.06.2.45 b) inconsistency within faculties regarding the role of staff with responsibility for learning, teaching and assessment was noted. For example not all faculties have an executive associate dean for teaching, learning and assessment. The Committee was invited to review this once there was clarity about the university's quality management and enhancement strategy and the roles within it

- AB.06.2.46 Programme Approvals
- AB.06.2.47 Further more detailed work would be needed to develop the arrangements for moving from a centralised to a devolved process for programme validation.
- AB.06.2.48 Faculty Boards:
- AB.06.2.49 (a) further discussions would take place with Deans and Faculty Board Chairs to enable detailed proposals to be brought to the next meeting
- AB.06.2.50 (b) membership of Faculty Boards should ensure a balance between elected and non-elected members whilst ensuring that the overall number of members of Faculty Boards did not exceed that of Academic Board
- AB.06.2.51 (c) the methods of electing members would need careful consideration to ensure Faculty Boards were effectively representative and to enable them to elect appropriate members onto Academic Board and its other sub-committees
- AB.06.2.52 Graduate Studies Committee
- Further work would be needed on clarifying the relationship of the committee to the Knowledge Transfer and Research Committee and to the work of faculties. The purpose of the committee was acknowledged as being concerned with providing a forum for M level students in which generic issues relating to the postgraduate student experience could be debated and which was not intended to micro-manage operational matters in relation to postgraduate provision. The committee recognised and indeed symbolised the strategic importance of the postgraduate agenda.
- AB.06.2.53 Knowledge Transfer and Research
- Following a discussion about whether the title of the committee should be reversed to recognise the symbolic importance of research in the University and in which the Vice Chancellor outlined the need to remedy perceived myths about whether the University was engaged in Knowledge Transfer or Research when in reality it was and should be engaged in both, the Committee agreed to amend the title to Research and Knowledge Exchange in recognition that this would express better UWE's preferred approach
- AB.06.2.54 International Group
- The need to ensure that internationalisation permeated throughout the committee structure was recognised.
- AB.06.2.55 UWE Federation
- Co-option onto the group would need to be carefully considered to ensure financial expertise was recognised.
- AB.06.2.56 Honorary Degrees and Professorial Committee
- The aim of the proposal was noted as being to combine the two existing committees and to place the processes onto an annual cycle with emergency procedures available when required.

- AB.06.2.57 Policy and Resources Committee:
- AB.06.2.58 (a) the Board supported wholeheartedly the proposal that the Vice Chancellor be in the chair of the PRC
- AB.06.2.59 (b) the implications for existing Board of Governor committees were recognised and although the creation of a PRC represented a significant change for the University, such a committee was the norm in most other institutions
- AB.06.2.60 The Committee agreed to recommend approval of the proposals in principle to the Board of Governors subject to the detailed amendments identified at the meeting. The Committee noted that detailed implementation plans would be brought to the next meeting following discussions between the Academic Registrar, UMG and faculties.
- AB.06.2.61 The Vice Chancellor thanked members for their constructive input into the discussion and reminded them that there was time for further feedback to be raised directly with either himself or with the Academic Registrar.

**Action: Secretary**

#### **DATES OF REMAINING MEETING IN 2005/2006**

- AB.06.2.62 8 June 2006.