



ACADEMIC BOARD

Minutes of a meeting of the Academic Board held on Wednesday 28th October 2009.

Present: D Allen; Professor J Arthurs; Professor M Boddy; J Bradley; Professor G Channon; A Cheshire; P Dowdall; M Frutos-Perez; T Goodhew; Professor P Gough; S Grive; Dr J Harrington; T Harrison (secretary); W Jones; Dr J Lanham; A Mathieson; T McGoldrick; Dr N McKenzie; P Nolan; M Partington; K Philips; C Rex; Professor R Ritchie; J Rushforth; R Scott; J Thomas; Dr S Waite; Professor S West (chair).

Apologies: Professor A Bensted; P Blatchford; P Catley; Professor J Duffield; Dr M Grey; D Hawes; G Sandford; G Wilson.

In attendance: Dr S Gutteridge; Professor P Olomolaiye.

AB09.10.1 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

Paper AB09/10/1 was received.

The Board approved the unconfirmed minutes of the meeting held on 10th June 2009.

AB09.10.2 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

AB09.10.2.1 AB09.06.6 Student Non Completion

Paper AB09/10/2 was received.

The Board received an update on the implementation of changes to regulations approved at its meeting in June 2009. The Board noted subsequent changes to the regulations that had been approved by Chair's Action.

AB09.10.2.2 AB09.06.12 Web Filtering

The Director of ITS reported that, due to current internet performance issues, the web filtering project was on hold. A report would be made to the Board at a later date as appropriate.

Action: Director of ITS

AB09.10.3 ACADEMIC BOARD GOVERNANCE 2009/2010

Paper AB09/10/3 was received.

AB09.10.3.1 The Board received its terms of reference, membership and operational arrangements for 2009/2010, noting amendments to the composition of Academic Board, the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee, the Research Committee and the Research Degrees Committee that had been agreed with the committee chairs for 2009/2010. The following amendments were added:

- the Student Union AGM date should be added to the committee calendar
- student membership term of office should be recorded as 1st July 2010.

AB09.10.3.2 The Chair informed the Board that a workshop involving Academic Board-related committee chairs and secretaries had been to look at the effectiveness and efficiency of the University's academic governance structure. The workshop had generated a number of innovative ideas about academic governance including the need to better align deliberative and executive structures and to be clear about the powers of each. It would be imperative that proposals enabled committees to make a difference, to ensure that time was being spent effectively and that they aligned with the proposals in the Vice Chancellor's Facing the Future paper. A report and recommendations would be made to the December 2009 meeting.

AB09.10.3.3 In response to a query, the Chair confirmed that an EIA of the academic governance arrangements was not applicable at this stage but that it would be required on any new arrangements.

Action : Academic Registrar

AB09.10.4 VICE CHANCELLOR'S REPORT

Paper AB09/10/4 was received.

The Board received the Vice Chancellor's report, noting in particular:

AB09.10.4.1 Facing up to the Future Roadshows - the powerpoint presentation, script and Q+As arising from the roadshows would shortly be placed on the intranet. Further feedback would be welcome from colleagues. The Vice Chancellor was committed to revisiting St Matts to provide more time for colleagues there to discuss specific issues relating to the transfer of activities. A Project Steering Group had been convened to support communication and engagement with the transfer. The Vice Chancellor was also committed to explore further with executive deans and heads of services specific queries arising from colleagues not able to attend the roadshows.

NSS – the importance of continuing to engage with the results of the survey was stressed in light of the demonstrably mixed picture across the University which demonstrated a lack of consistency in practices across the institution.

UWE Academic – the academic career pathway had been re-developed and refreshed. Publication of the new definition would take place within the next week together with Q+As and a diagram showing the wide spectrum of current academic activities. Further information could be obtained from PVC Gough or the Director of HR.

New Schemes – an early career researcher starter scheme and the learning and teaching fellowship scheme had recently been launched.

Meet the Employers Fair – the recent fair had been very well received by employers, staff and students.

Bidding - a significant number of new bids had been received and the University's recent successes in EU bidding was noted.

Welcome Weekend – the 2009 welcome weekend had been a success and work was underway to identify improvements for next year particularly the use of Building 2 on the Frenchay site.

Sustainability – UWE's bid for a THE Award had been shortlisted into the finals; Bradford University had won the award. The Vice Chancellor was keen to look for further opportunities to celebrate the University's work.

Health Centre – a new Health Centre had recently opened on campus.

UUK Conference - the Vice Chancellor noted that the general mood amongst vice chancellors was one of realism about the future of HE in the coming years. The significant pressures on the public sector had been noted as had the critical role of HE in contributing to a range of agendas to improve the economic and social health of the UK. The sector was expecting the outcomes from the fee review and publication of the Government's Framework for Education. A significant debating point at the UUK Conference had been around the current debate about research concentration and whether a smaller number of institutions should receive the majority of the research funding. The Vice Chancellor had undertaken a number of follow up meetings since the Conference, taking the opportunity to seek ministerial reassurance of their awareness about the impact of UWE on the region and the professions. It was clear, in light of recent speeches made by Lord Mandelson, that UWE's strategy of working in partnership with a whole range of organisations was absolutely consistent with current government and CBI thinking.

AB09.10.4.2 The Board noted that a VC Update would shortly be circulated to all staff.

AB09.10.5 **RESEARCH COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT TO ACADEMIC BOARD 2008/2009**
Paper AB09/10/5

AB09.10.5.1 The Board received the annual report from the Research Committee.

AB09.10.6 **INVESTING FOR FUTURE GROWTH**
Paper AB09/10/6 was received.

AB09.10.6.1 The Chair thanked colleagues for their feedback to date on his paper and reminded members that the role of the Board was to offer advice to him as he developed his recommendations to the Board of Governors. Responses had been received from UWESU, Unison and UCU; there had been no formal response from Unite.

AB09.10.6.2 The Chair reminded the Board of the rationale behind the proposals in terms of the need to generate and release more financial resources to support future investment in the University, and establishing a more coherent and efficient organisational structure. He clarified that the hub and spoke model of connecting faculties and central professional services was not about centralisation but about clarifying where things were best done and providing for better connecting the two.

AB09.10.6.3 Initial feedback from faculties and central professional services had been received under the following headings:

- capacity and capability to deliver successfully
- academic structure
- hub and spoke/one university
- 15% savings/income generation
- vision, mission and focus

AB09.10.6.4 The Chair confirmed that the University's severance scheme would continue to underpin the proposals and noted recent change to HR policy in relation to internal recruitment.

AB09.10.6.5 Executive Deans reported on the outcomes from recent Faculty Board discussions of the Vice Chancellor's paper as follows:

AB09.10.6.5.1 The SSH Faculty Board had expressed very real and deep concerns about the University's capacity to deliver on everything it was hoping to do in addition to activities it was already committed to, and had requested a detailed schedule for the proposals. Many staff in the faculty had a quite unsettling sense of uncertainty about their future within the context of references to 15% cuts, career pathways, REF etc. and the Faculty Board had stressed that the effect of this on staff morale shouldn't be underestimated.

AB09.10.6.5.2 The BBS Faculty Board had welcomed the recognition of the importance of having a business school in the University but had raised concerns about the departmental view of the world reflected in the paper which was not representative of the way in which the faculty operated.

AB09.10.6.5.3 The FCA Faculty Board had acknowledged the underpinning logic behind the proposals and saw opportunities for innovative curriculum design and relationship building across disciplines. The Faculty Board had noted concerns about the capacity to re-engage with another round of restructuring but had welcomed the focus provided in the Vice Chancellor's paper.

AB09.10.6.5.4 The FET Faculty Board had engaged in wide consultation across all staff in the faculty. Generally there was broad recognition of the need to remove the school level whilst noting the importance of some school level activities at operational level. The quality of the student experience, inter-professional and interdisciplinary working needed to be enabled by the new structure. There was widespread acceptance that the departmental structure needed to be made to work but there were concerns about the detail of some of the merging propositions which raised concerns about whether the proposals were about managerial imperatives rather than academic coherence. There were concerns about the hub and spoke model as it rolled out and risks that there could be a reduction in the quality of provision and service were noted. The faculty was already operating close to the research target and this had therefore not been a significant issue of debate at the meeting.

AB09.10.6.5.5 The HLS Faculty Board had broadly similar views to FET in terms of research as they were also operating at around the required mark. The faculty would have welcomed a closer relationship with Education as proposed in the earlier iterations of the proposal. The faculty had a number of large departments (the largest had 120+ staff) which worked well in terms of academic coherence but created managerial challenges.

- AB09.10.6.5.6** Faculty Academic Registrars had stressed the need to ensure that decisions about where activities were best undertaken were undertaken sensitively and without losing the potential for economies of scale of faculty based activities.
- AB09.10.6.6** The Chair reminded the Board that the 15% identified in the paper wasn't solely concerned with making savings but about achieving growth – there was an urgent need for colleagues to recognise the importance of growing new areas to protect the University's future. He noted that no proposals had been forthcoming from faculties or central professional services about how they would deliver the 15% at this stage. Growth was important but it must be efficient and in appropriate strategic areas (e.g. internationalisation).
- AB09.10.6.7** The Board was reminded about the latest set of NSS results and the urgent need to become better at joining things up across the institution and improving quality. There was clearly a need for some cross faculty roles (e.g. scheme directors) to co-ordinate and drive initiatives across faculties especially if the school structure was removed. It would be imperative that departments did not become silos.
- AB09.10.6.8** During a wide ranging discussion the following points were noted:
- the importance of ensuring structures were fit for purpose in enabling the University to compete regionally, nationally and globally
 - the need to better understand the role of social sciences at the University. The paper raised a number of questions and a review would be triggered within the coming weeks involving all staff in the social sciences disciplines
 - the need for urgent action on the part of central professional services to streamline processes and develop more innovative approaches to business processes
 - the importance of ensuring that changes were well communicated to students
 - the importance of high quality management information at all levels to inform decision making and support the devolution of responsibility and accountability
 - the need to clarify what would/would not be devolved to departmental level
 - the importance of using language carefully (e.g. reconfiguration was a more accurate reflection of intentions than 'takeover')
 - the need to recognise that if schools were removed from the structure, the complexity of some areas of work would not fit a one size fits all and there would need to be a careful analysis of risk to ensure management and leadership capacity and infrastructure at departmental level.
- AB09.10.6.9** The Chair thanked colleagues for their feedback and confirmed that he would make his final announcement of his decisions in the next week. This would provide the certainty urgently required to move forward.
- AB09.10.6.10** The Board thanked the Vice Chancellor's Policy Officer on the succinctness of her summary of the feedback received from across the University.

AB09.10.7 ACADEMIC CALENDAR

Paper AB09/10/7 was received.

AB09.10.7.1 The Chair of the Academic Calendar Working Group introduced proposals for a revised UWE Standard Academic Calendar from 2010/2011, noting that the academic calendar had been under development over several years and a number of outstanding issues had been unresolved. Two rounds of consultation on the proposals had taken place. The working group had noted the inherent difficulties of setting an academic calendar in a modular based university with its field/award board structure and had identified a set of principles early on to inform the development of the proposals. The key proposals represented a phasing of change over several years. The view of the working group was that none of the areas identified for further consultation and review would be insurmountable in moving forward as proposed.

AB09.10.7.2 Executive Deans reported on the outcomes from recent Faculty Board discussions of the proposals as follows:

AB09.10.7.2.1 The SSH Faculty Board had recommended the proposals be referred back for further work because of the impact the early September start would have on international students and wanted the University to reconsider whether the 12 week teaching block had to remain sacrosanct.

AB09.10.7.2.2 The FET Faculty Board had endorsed the proposals, whilst noting some concern about the practicalities of holding two sets of award ceremonies and the scale of the resit period in light of recent regulatory changes.

AB09.10.7.2.3 The BBS Faculty Board had endorsed the proposals.

AB09.10.7.2.4 During a wider discussion, the following points were noted:

- the need to think about improving the student experience of registration, module enrolment and corresponding access issues earlier
- whether it would be appropriate to consider reducing the number of teaching weeks whilst retaining current contact norms and whether the current timetabling issues would, in fact, be worsened
- it would not be realistic to change the timing of assessment period three at this point because of the unknowns about the impact of F12 and attendant burdens on marking and administrative staff.

AB09.10.7.2.5 The Board agreed to support the proposals as set out and thanked the Chair and members of the Working Group.

Action: Chair of the Academic Calendar Working Group

AB09.10.8 PORTFOLIO REVIEW

Paper AB09/10/8 was received.

AB09.10.8.1 The Director of PBI presented an overview of the implementation of last year's portfolio review noting that copies of the final report were available on request. All faculties and a number of selected central professional services had been involved in the portfolio review project. The project was concerned with ensuring that the UWE portfolio worked in terms of institutional strategy and the creation of headroom for innovation and

improvements to the student experience.

AB09.10.8.2 Five major strands to implementation had been noted:

- 1 – to provide strategic direction through the annual strategic planning round to guide curriculum development
- 2 – to support innovative and incentivise market led curriculum developments with special emphasis on cross university initiatives that provide the University with a competitive edge
- 3 – to facilitate and support the use of market information across the University
- 4 – to embed a yearly review process of the current portfolio based on agreed analyses to identify programmes at risk
- 5 – to ensure infrastructure, processes and procedures support the flexibility of the University's offer and reduce the time from idea to market

A new Portfolio Development Group, chaired by PVC Channon, would be concerned with encouraging cross faculty and innovation within guidelines about market attractiveness. Some new developments would be pump primed.

AB09.10.8.3 The Board agreed to endorse the proposals as set out, welcoming the transparent approach to the management of the University's academic portfolio.

AB09.10.9 MASTERPLANNING

AB09.10.9.1 The Deputy Vice Chancellor reported on the recent Masterplanning consultation which had indicated that staff were broadly supportive of the key themes with the exception of current thinking around a proposed RKE business park. The next steps were to take a slightly revised Masterplan to the Board of Governors meeting in November, and the development of a concept statement for South Gloucestershire Council. A detailed transport plan would be added to the Masterplan in Spring 2010. June 2010 was the point at which the first large project, subject to planning consents, would begin.

AB09.10.9.2 Current Masterplanning priorities were now turning to the specific design briefs for individual buildings. PVC Channon had joined the Masterplanning Board to provide an academic focus for the next phase of designing new and existing space. Proposals would be presented to the June 2010 meeting of the Academic Board. A full analysis of the ongoing maintenance needs for the University had been undertaken as part of the broader masterplanning project.

AB09.10.9.3 UWESU had undertaken a parallel consultation (1000 responses) with students. The outcome had been largely positive about the new campus plans and the general direction of travel the University was taking.

AB09.10.10 ACADEMIC BOARD ANNUAL REPORT TO THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS 2008/2009

Paper AB09/10/9 was received.

AB09.10.10.1 The Board approved the annual report to the Board of Governors subject to noting the inclusion of the University's Schools and College Partnership

Strategy.

Action: Academic Registrar

AB09.10.11 FITNESS TO STUDY

Paper AB09/10/10 was received.

AB09.10.11.1 The Director of Student Services introduced the policy which was deemed necessary due to the changes to participation in higher education which had led to a student profile which more accurately reflected society at large. This had led to most HEIs finding themselves drawn into difficult situations around students in crisis.

AB09.10.11.2 The proposed policy was based on best practice elsewhere and was intended to provide a compassionate and transparent framework within which to support students and staff in responding to mental health issues. Evidence suggested that where these policies already existed, the experience for all had been positive. The policy also set out guidance on students returning to study which have proved to be helpful to medical professionals supporting students.

AB09.10.11.3 The Chair welcomed policy commenting on its timeliness for students entering professional practice domains where mental health issues could be picked up in practice thus extending the University's duty of care beyond the student to the client groups they came into contact with.

AB09.10.11.4 The Board agreed to approve the policy noting:

- that its communication status should be changed to public
- that an EIA had been undertaken on the policy
- that references to head of school would need to be removed when the new faculty structure was introduced
- promulgation of the policy would be through the running of awareness raising workshops run by the Student Services Department engaging with faculties and the UWESU.
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Action: Director of Student Services

AB09.10.12 CORPORATE ETHICS POLICY

Paper AB09/10/11 was received.

AB09.10.12.1 The Board received the policy and implementation plan as approved by the Board of Governors.

AB09.10.13 QAA INSTITUTIONAL AUDIT

The Board noted that the action plan arising from the QAA Institutional Audit would be presented to the next meeting. The full report had been circulated and was available on the QAA website (www.qaa.ac.uk)

AB09.10.14 QAA COLLABORATIVE PROVISION AUDIT

The Board noted that the QAA would be undertaking an audit of the University's relationship with Brickfields College, Malaysia, between November 2009 and March 2010.

AB09.10.15 PROFESSIONAL ACCREDITATION

The Board noted that the LLB degree delivered at Independent College, Dublin, received accreditation from the Honorable Society of the King's Inns who regulate the barrister profession in Ireland.

AB09.10.16 TAYLORS UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, MALAYSIA

The Board noted that the Chair of Academic Board had approved a proposal to develop a dual award with Taylors University College, Malaysia.

AB09.10.17 AWARD TITLES

The Board noted that the Chair had approved a proposal that the award of Doctor of Engineering (EngD) be added to the list of University Awards.

AB09.10.18 STUDENT EXPERIENCE

Papers AB09/10/12 and AB09/10/13 were received.

AB09.10.18.1 The Board received the report from the Dean of Students noting that a draft action plan relating to the recent NSS results at university level has been discussed by the Senior Management Team and would be circulated for wider discussion within the University to address the key themes that need to be resolved at institutional level. Faculties were expected to continue responding to subject specific issues identified in the results.

AB09.10.18.2 The SRC President reported on current activities and priorities, noting that UWE would be represented on the National Student Forum providing an excellent opportunity to engage at national level. Of particular note in the report was concerns raised about the lack of catering facilities on campus at 'non-standard' times. This had been identified in a number of fora recently. The Vice Chancellor stressed that the intention was to create a vibrant campus and there needed to be a shift in thinking about the working day. Work already underway led by the Dean of Students would make recommendations in due course.

AB09.10.19 REPORTS FROM FACULTY BOARDS

AB09.10.19.1 Executive Deans reported that the focus of Faculty Boards had been on the academic calendar proposals and the Vice Chancellor's Facing the Future paper.

AB09.10.20 MEETINGS OF SUB COMMITTEES AND JOINT COMMITTEES

Paper AB09/10/14 was received.

Board of Governors – 7th July 2009

Bristol Business School Faculty Board – 6th May 2009

Creative Arts Faculty Board – 6th May 2009

Environment and Technology Faculty Board – 6th May 2009

Health and Life Sciences Faculty Board – 7th May 2009

Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee – 15th May 2009

Research Committee – 8th May 2009

Internationalisation Strategy Group – 19th May 2009 and 22nd September 2009

UWE Federation Group – 24th September 2009

AB09.10.21 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Wednesday 9th December 2009

Wednesday 24th March 2010

Wednesday 9th June 2010