

ACADEMIC BOARD

Minutes of the meeting of the Academic Board held on Wednesday 16 September 2015.

Present: Jane Harrington (Chair), Martin Boddy, Lauren Conen, Clayton Davies, Benjamin Drew, Manuel Frutos-Perez, Alex Gilkison (until Min. AB15.9.5.3), Sarah Green, Bernhard Gross, Catherine Hobbs, John Lanham (for Paul Olomolaiye), James Lee, Mandy Lee, Lamine Mahdjoubi, Ray McDowall (for Noel Burchell), Jo Midgley, Chris Moore, Glenn Parry, Jack Polson, Peter Rawlings, Darren Reynolds, Jan Richardson (for Steven Neill), Jeanette Sakel, Rachel Sales, Rosie Scott-Ward, Aniko Varadi.

In attendance: Jason Briddon, Emma Brown (for AB15.9.8), Chris Gledhill (minutes), Alastair Osborn, Tracy Willis.

Observers: Delia Bean, Sarah Hickie (SU).

Apologies: Rachel Cowie, Dylan Jones-Evans, Helen Lloyd Wildman, Glenn Lyons, Steven Neill, Paul Olomolaiye, Steve West.

AB15.9.1 Membership and Terms of Reference *Paper AB15/09/01 was received and noted.*

AB15.9.1.1 The Chair welcomed the Students' Union President and Vice President, Education and the two observers to the meeting.

Members noted the vacancy recently created by the retirement of the FBL Head of Department (Accounting, Economics and Finance) and that this would be addressed outside of the meeting.

ACTION: Secretary

AB15.9.2 Minutes and matters arising *Paper AB15/09/02 was received.*

AB15.9.2.1 Minutes
The minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 8 July 2015 were **approved**.

AB15.9.2.2 Visiting titles
Members noted that a full report on visiting titles would be provided to the December 2015 meeting of Academic Board.

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

AB15.9.3 NSS Results *Paper AB15/09/03 was received.*

AB15.9.3.1 The Deputy Vice Chancellor, Academic led Members through the report.

AB15.9.3.2 Members' attention was drawn to the following:

- The increase of the overall satisfaction score by 1 percentage point to 85%. The sector average had remained at 86% for the last 3 years;
- Satisfaction scores had increased for all areas except 'organisation and management';
- The largest increase (9 percentage points to 69%) was in relation to the question 'feedback on my course has been prompt';
- The University's NSS task force had visited 36 programmes to date and had identified a lot of good practice which would be shared both as a report and on a wider scale as part of a Showcase Conference;

- The very high levels of student satisfaction with UWE’s library services and ITS (91% and 90% respectively);
- The NSS task force was a University-wide initiative and there were specific challenges in relation to timetabling, professional services and SPS.

AB15.9.3.3 During a full and considered discussion, Members noted in particular that:

- the subject level satisfaction results analysis was particularly useful as this level of detail facilitated examination of a number of aspects and informed discussions with a range of colleagues;
- a focus was being applied to student engagement and qualitative data was being used to develop case studies which in turn would be disseminated as examples of best practice;
- the NSS task force was perceived as a welcome and constructive exercise that promoted an emphasis on sustainable improvement which had been helpful in focusing discussion;
- the importance of working with the professional services in applying this integrated approach;
- the Student Journey Directorate had been established to support this approach, whose remit included:
 - ensuring that the ambitions of Strategy 2020 were secured in relation to student-facing services and the promotion of ‘programme identity’ so that students felt cared for and understood and that programmes were highly rated
 - the creation of enhancement activity to the degree that students had an on-demand, one-stop service at the time they need it
 - the development of localised support through ‘Open Door Teams’, located close to where programmes were based and teaching took place
 - January 2016 – pilots at Frenchay and Glenside of ‘specialist Faculty teams’ to handle recruitment, marketing, international student matters, finance, etc. These would operate alongside the University’s usual student support services such as counselling
 - The identification of a replacement student records system. This was a challenging project, given the imperative to procure a system that met needs from both an IT perspective and in terms of student requirements
 - A more programmatic approach to timetabling – the responsibility for timetabling would move to Academic Services from November 2015
 - Personal development – an Academic Personal Tutor (APT) Working Group had been set up to examine how the University can better support personal development. Members noted that UWE students had recognised in the NSS that APTs were the best at what they do;
- L2020 – projects included the extended year and the delivery of activities outside of the curriculum;
- The NSS task force had learnt a great deal from programmes that were doing things effectively. For example:
 - in Psychology, student panels and student suggestions had become a natural and integral part of finding solutions to issues
 - communications were more successful in some areas than others and particularly where personal development was effectively embedded;
 - ITS sought to continually improve and was using the collective verbatim comments to ensure that the whole team had an understanding of student opinion.

AB15.9.4 Draft Response to HEFCE QA Consultation

Paper AB15/09/04 was received.

AB15.9.4.1 The Deputy Head of Academic Services led Members through the draft response to the consultation.

AB15.9.4.2 Members noted the following:

- The consultation sat within a political context in which a Green Paper on the future of HE and the proposed Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) was imminent. There was no reference to the TEF in the consultation as the latter had started before the concept of the TEF had been mooted. The University's response sought to pre-empt the potential development of two quality assessment systems;
- The consultation referred to quality 'assessment' not quality 'assurance', indicating a shift towards outcomes as a measure of quality;
- The proposal of a greater role for governing bodies and for these to provide HEFCE with a report of assurance of the role of their respective academic boards. The potential conflict that could be created by this proposal in relation to academic governance arrangements;
- Movement or removal of the UK Quality Code would necessitate the re-drafting of institutions' quality frameworks, as these currently used the Code as their benchmark;
- Significant changes proposed in relation to external examiners, including the establishment of a national register. The University would still wish to ensure that the independence and training of its external examiners were secured;
- The consultation referred to autonomy, but it was not clear how this would be achieved through the proposals put forward;
- The outcomes of the consultation and the TEF were expected to be published on 17 December 2015, both of which would impact upon the Academic Board and its committees.

AB15.9.4.3 Members approved the University's response to HEFCE's QA consultation for submission by the deadline of 18 September 2015.

ACTION: Deputy Head of Academic Services

AB15.9.4.4 The Associate Dean, ACE informed Members that the University had been part of the Grade Point Average (GPA) pilot project in which it used retrospective data modelling on student achievement data using a common GPA scale, the net result of which had been no change to the degree classifications originally awarded.

The Academic Board welcomed the Associate Dean's offer of sharing the project report with Members.

ACTION: Associate Dean, ACE, via Head of Governance

ITEMS FOR APPROVAL

AB15.9.5 Research Strategy

Paper AB15/09/05 was received.

AB15.9.5.1 The Pro Vice Chancellor, Research & Business Engagement outlined the content of the strategy to the Academic Board and referred Members to the summary and rationale document provided with the strategy, which outlined in particular the changes made in response to the observations made by the Academic Board upon the previous draft version of the strategy at its meeting on 8 July 2015.

AB15.9.5.2 Members noted that:

- The strategy covered the period up to and including the 2020/2021 academic year, so would encompass the next REF round and it provided the framework for Faculty Research Improvement Plans, which would take the strategy forward in practical terms;
- An additional range of metrics/KPIs would be incorporated at faculty level, thereby taking account of differing priorities across faculties;
- Ambition and investment –
 - The strategic ambition was to achieve world class research with impact in selected research areas: translated as meaning growth in ‘world-leading and internationally excellent research’ as defined and measured by the REF
 - a detailed paper on research investment was reported to the Governors’ Strategic Planning and Performance Committee in May 2015, the highlights of which were outlined in the paper to the Academic Board;
- whilst strongly emphasising the need to focus on high quality research with impact, the strategy also recognised the broad spectrum of engagement with research;
- in response to the Academic Board’s previous observation that “teaching and learning was missing from the Research-Impact Cycle”, the Pro Vice Chancellor reported that its absence was due to the fact that HEFCE had a very specific definition for research impact which excluded teaching and learning;
- L2020 would enhance the visibility of research to the student body, students’ engagement with teaching and learning would be informed and underpinned by research and a research culture would be promoted across the whole University;
- The important articulation of the balance between research for impact and research for the generation of new knowledge;
- The need to ensure the balancing of the development of current staff with the bringing in of new staff and those at the start of their career. Existing staff were able to apply for and be tested against external applicants for Research Awards (funding and additional time);
- Targets would not be set at the level of individual staff; expectations and performance would be established and monitored through effective PDR processes at faculty level. Targets would differ between disciplines.

Ms E. Brown, Student-Led Enhancement Manager arrived at the meeting.

AB15.9.5.3 Members welcomed the revised strategy, its explicit ambition and emphasis upon research excellence, and its articulation of enabling all staff.

Professor A. Gilkison left the meeting at this point.

AB15.9.5.4 Members noted that the language used in relation to employability was supportive in some areas of the strategy and directive in others and suggested that this be made consistent throughout the document.

ACTION: Pro Vice Chancellor, Research & Business Engagement

AB15.9.5.5 Subject to the above amendment, Members **approved** the revised Research Strategy.

AB15.9.5.6 Members noted that the Research Strategy was intended for internal circulation only and that a version for external purposes would now be prepared.

AB15.9.6 Annual Report of the Academic Board to the Board of Governors

Paper AB15/09/06 was received.

AB15.9.6.1 The Deputy Head of Academic Services reminded Members of the requirement to provide an annual report of the Academic Board's activities to assure the Board of Governors that its responsibilities had been effectively discharged.

AB15.9.6.2 He drew Members' attention in particular to the following:

- the significant enhancement activity during the year and its consequences;
- the work undertaken in collaboration with other committees and with the Students' Union on Early Intervention and Extenuating Circumstances, both of which would deliver extensive changes for students and improve the student experience;
- the Academic Board's thematic analysis of the 280 external examiner reports, all of which reported confidence in the standards of the University's Awards;
- the role of the Academic Board in the preparations for the QAA Higher Education Review (HER) of the institution, including:
 - the establishment of a planning and co-ordination board, charged with the production of the self-evaluation document (SED) and associated planning for the visit
 - monitoring of the progress of that HER board
 - endorsement of the SED for submission to the QAA and the Board of Governors;
- the collaborative work undertaken with the Graduate School to improve the student experience for postgraduate research students and with the Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee throughout the year to develop a University research strategy.

AB15.9.6.3 Members **approved** the report to the Board of Governors.

REPORTS AND UPDATES

AB15.9.7 Update on the Higher Education Review (HER)

AB15.9.7.1 The Deputy Vice Chancellor, Academic informed Members that the QAA panel was due to meet that week following which the University would be notified of the schedule for the review in October, who the QAA team wished to see and would receive confirmation of the lines of enquiry.

AB15.9.7.2 Members noted the planned briefing sessions and forthcoming trial review due to take place in the coming weeks.

AB15.9.7.3 The Deputy Vice Chancellor, Academic expressed her thanks to the staff and members of the Students' Union for their involvement in preparing for the HER.

AB15.9.8 University Response to the Student Submission for the HER with QAA

Paper AB15/09/07 was received.

AB15.9.8.1 The Student-Led Enhancement Manager introduced the report and outlined to Members some of the actions taken by the University in response to the recommendations about the UWE student experience identified in the Student Written Submission.

AB15.9.8.2 Members noted in particular that:

- the Student Feedback Task and Finish Group was developing a number of initiatives, including:
 - Recommendations 1-4 related to strengthening the Student Voice –

- the Partnership Board had developed joint work streams to ensure alignment of activity between the Students' Union Strategic Plan and Strategy 2020
- Student Feedback Task and Finish Group was developing initiatives such as: instant feedback, UWE Opinion Community and a programme-focused survey
- Development of Student Engagement Strategy
- Learning 2020 – will examine Induction and Orientation and how student feedback opportunities are communicated to students
- The success of “You Said UWE Did” of 2014-2015 would be built upon, with development of the website to provide students with greater detail of changes made;
- Recommendations 5-7 related to L2020 Assessment and Feedback Project;
- 3 recommendations in relation to placements and employability – Employability Work-based Learning Task and Finish Group established to focus upon all work-based opportunities, including those of an entrepreneurial nature. The VP Education was now a permanent member of the Group and the UWESU's JobShop Co-ordinator had become an additional member and would attend meetings as and when required;
- 4 recommendations relating to student support –
 - Additional costs were now accessible to students
 - Student Journey Directorate established to ensure that the student experience was at the heart of activity of professional services
 - The University continues to work closely with the Students' Union;
- 3 recommendations in relation to communications –
 - Projects relating to timetabling and the start of the year were ongoing, involving close liaison between the University and the Students' Union;
 - Students' timetables for 2015/2016 had been made available earlier than previous years
 - Student Communications Team established and UWE Marketing examining new content management system to present information to students in a different way.

AB15.9.8.3 Members also noted that Hartpury College was currently liaising with the NUS and that the College would be happy for UWESU to have access to the findings of this work.

The Student-Led Enhancement Manager left the meeting.

AB15.9.9 Update from UWE Student Representatives

Paper AB15/09/08 was received.

AB15.9.9.1 The Vice President, Education introduced the report which provided an update on the work of the Students' Union and details of the priorities for her role.

AB15.9.9.2 Members noted that a key objective for the SU team was the engagement of students in identifying areas of priority for the year. A 'priority ballot' would be held at the Freshers' Fair in which students would vote for a particular area – e.g. housing, sustainability, sport, health – with the two most popular becoming areas of focus for UWESU for 2015/2016.

AB15.9.10 Vice Chancellor's Update
Paper AB15/09/09 was received and noted.

- AB15.9.10.1 Members noted the following in particular:
- Student recruitment –
 - o Strong recruitment against the increased target for 2015/2016 HEFCE funded home undergraduate students
 - o The expectation that overall financial targets for international recruitment would be achieved.
- AB15.9.10.2 The Academic Board **agreed** to formally record its thanks to the University's academic and professional services staff involved in securing this level of successful recruitment.
- AB15.9.10.3 – Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR, November 2015) –
- o sector bodies were currently finalising their submissions to government ahead of the CSR and a number of changes that would impact across the sector and the University was anticipated
 - o funding cuts in relation to STEM subjects would have a particularly serious impact upon UWE.

ITEMS TO NOTE

AB15.9.11 Chair's Actions

Members noted that on behalf of Academic Board:

- i. The Chair approved the revised Quality Assurance process at Helsinki Psychotherapy Institute (HPI);
- ii. The Chair approved a change of name for the new ACE Field of Study 'Lens and Screen Media' to 'Lens and Moving Image';
- iii. The Chair approved the roll-over of expired tenure of Faculty Board and Academic Board memberships to the first term of the 2015/2016 academic year and to hold elections at the start of that term.

AB15.9.12 Any Other Business

- AB15.9.12.1 Members noted that work was currently underway to examine how best to increase the visibility of minutes of meetings to UWE staff and improve the communication of decisions made.

Members requested that the decision to roll over the expired tenure of Faculty Board memberships as detailed in the previous minute, be communicated to the Faculty Boards.

ACTION: Head of Governance

AB15.7.13 Dates of future meetings

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

Wednesday	16 December 2015
Wednesday	2 March 2016
Wednesday	18 May 2016
Wednesday	6 July 2016