



ACADEMIC BOARD

Minutes of the meeting held on 3 July 2024 in 1L01, Frenchay Campus

- Present: Steve West (Chair), Yvonne Beach, Georgie Benford, Amanda Coffey, Wendy Colvin, Adele Drew-Hill, Kevin Golden, John Griffiths, Bernhard Gross, John Hancock, Sabiha Khan, Jessica Lamond, James Lee, Elena Marco, Jo Michell, Cathy Minett-Smith, Kolawole Samuel Olure, Vlasios Sarantinos, Kos Siliafis, Jim Smith, Heather Moyes (Secretary).
- Apologies: Jodie Anstee, Dan Wood, Georgina Gough, Katie Jenkins, Hilary Lowe, Jo Midgley, Oluwadamilola Okeyoyin, Kezia Paul, Logan Smith, Richard Strange, Nicola Temple, Emma Weitkamp.
- In attendance: Rachel Cowie; Chris Gledhill; Paul Roberts and Kirsti Norris (item AB.24.07.02 only)
- Observers: Rachel Colley (Students’ Union); Carolyn Donoghue (Board of Governors); Rebecca Lingwood (Halpin Partnership).

AB.24.07.1	WELCOME AND APOLOGIES
AB.24.07.1.1	Members were welcomed to the meeting and apologies noted. A particular welcome was extended to the Students’ Union sabbatical officer representatives for 2024/25.
AB.24.07.1.2	No declarations of interest were received.
AB.24.07.2	DEEP DIVE: UWE Bristol Climate and Sustainability Plan
	<i>Paper AB.24.07.01 was received.</i>
AB.24.07.2.1	Members considered a presentation from the PVC Head of College of Arts, Technology and the Environment, the Head of Environment and Sustainability and the Energy Manager on the University’s Climate and Sustainability Plan, the University’s achievements so far and work underway across education, research and the estate to deliver the University’s priorities in this regard.
AB.24.07.2.2	Members heard: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> That UWE Bristol had a significant international profile as a result of its focus on sustainability over the past thirty years with numerous accreditations and accolades achieved by both the University and the Students’ Union over the period.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That the Climate and Sustainability Plan for 2024-26, which was published on the University website, set out the immediate priorities for the next two years taking into account the current financial context, and had been designed to be as accessible and inclusive as possible. • That the Plan set out concrete actions, including the installation of the distributed heat network currently underway, consideration of how to use the estate most effectively for teaching and research, completion of mapping of all programmes to the Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) framework, and using the UN Sustainable Development Goals to inform all decision-making. • A new action-planning workshop model has been developed through which Schools and Professional Services teams could consider how they can contribute to the achievement of the University’s sustainability goals. • The success of the Climate module, the development of which had involved many staff and students and which a number of international partners were keen to adopt for their students.
<p>AB.24.07.2.3</p>	<p>Members welcomed the presentation and noted in discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive feedback of the value of the new workshop, for example from staff in the College of Business and Law. • The importance of aligning sustainability work very clearly with the University’s research strategy. • Opportunities arising through the UWE-Programmes initiative to embed ESD across all programme design and enhancement activities. • That UWE Bristol appeared to score lower in relation to “ethical careers than for other areas of ESD. Members heard that there should be some improvement in scores in the next People and Planet assessment round as the University had now articulated an ethical careers policy, however this stopped short of a fully “fossil-free” approach in favour of ensuring students were supported to make informed decisions about which sectors and employers they wished to pursue. • That there had been a University-wide call for input to the Climate module and that any perceived gaps in the subject matter expertise of contributors reflected who had opted to participate. • That the distributed heat network would be powered by gas for the time-being, but alternatives were being explored and in the meantime the University would be able to take some 47 individual boilers out of use. • The need to make appropriate investment decisions in the current financial context, noting that investment in sustainability was important for long-term resilience.
<p>AB.24.07.3</p>	<p>MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING</p>
<p>AB.24.07.3.1</p>	<p>Previous minutes <i>Paper AB.24.07.02 was received.</i></p>
<p>AB.24.07.3.1.1</p>	<p>Members approved the minutes of the meeting held 15 May 2024 as a correct record, subject to an amendment to minute AB.24.05.2.2.2. to reflect a request that the Deputy Registrar circulate the advice received from the Business Intelligence Team regarding evidence of any impact of</p>

	<p>the communications campaign on numbers of students not submitting assessed work at the first submission point. [Action: Deputy Registrar; Secretary]</p>
AB.24.07.3.2	<p>Action sheet and matters arising <i>Paper AB.24.07.03 was received.</i></p>
AB.24.07.3.2.1	<p>Members noted the record of actions in progress and completed.</p>
AB.24.07.3.2.2	<p><u>AB.24.05.2.3.3 Late arrivals of international students</u></p> <p>The Deputy Registrar reported that she was working with the College Deans for Learning and Teaching to explore the proportion of international students arriving late who had undertaken the Thrive programme, with a view to making this compulsory for late registrants.</p> <p>Members noted that consideration was currently being given to extending the late arrival window further in light of anticipated student numbers for 2024/25 and to align with the wider market. The potential impact on the assessment timetable was being reviewed, recognising the need to balance recruitment targets with supporting students to succeed.</p> <p>It was noted that there was also a tension with work in progress to explore the impact of early assessment of students as a means of identifying those at risk of non-continuation. [Action: Deputy Registrar]</p>
AB.24.07.4	STANDING AGENDA ITEMS
AB.24.07.4.1	<p>Vice-Chancellor's Report <i>Paper AB.24.07.04 was received.</i></p>
AB.24.07.4.1.1	<p>The committee received a report from the Chair on matters of relevance to members.</p>
AB.24.07.4.1.2	<p>Members noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The forthcoming installation of the new Chancellor, Sir Peter Bazalgette. Members were encouraged to read and share an article by him in the Financial Times from the previous day, which made a powerful case for the value of the creative industries. • That graduation ceremonies were moving to the Bristol Beacon from this summer and that the additional space available there afforded more room for staff to attend. • That both Universities UK and the Alliance mission group were preparing white papers with a view to influencing the higher education policy of the new government after the next day's general election and that it would be important to promote a positive message focussed on what universities could offer the economy and their localities. • That the Board of Governors' meeting the following week would consider of the focussed strategic plan for 2024-26.

AB.24.07.4.2	<p>Students' Union Report <i>Paper AB.24.05.05 was received.</i></p>
AB.24.07.4.2.1	<p>Members noted the report from the Students' Union on matters of shared interest.</p> <p>Members noted in particular:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That the new Sabbatical Officer team was trialling a new approach to induction, developed as part of the Reimagining Student Representation project. • Congratulations to the Students' Union on being awarded "Excellent" in the Green Impact Awards for the eighth year running. • That the Vice-President: Education's focus would be on strengthening student representation, better data and more feedback to support collaboration, career development and employability opportunities, and mental health and wellbeing. • Significant input from the Students' Union into UUK's recent report on harm reduction, another area in which UWE Bristol and the Students' Union at UWE were sector leading.
AB.24.07.4.3	<p>Strategy 2030 implementation: UWE-Research <i>Paper AB.24.06 was received.</i></p>
AB.24.07.4.3.1	<p>The Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Provost presented an update on the University's research strategy.</p>
AB.24.07.4.3.2	<p>Members heard that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee had agreed a set of research principles to guide thinking on how the University shaped its priorities and activities. • Research would now be focussed around three major research beacons addressing Creative Practice and Future Technologies, Helping People to Live Better for Longer and Building Sustainable & Resilient Environments. These would be underpinned by a enabling cross-cutting Digital Futures theme. The new approach was designed to be more accessible and inclusive, as well as providing a clear signal of areas of strategic focus for research in which there was critical mass. • Alongside the beacons, there would continue to be research centres of excellence at different stages of evolution. Criteria to determine how best to proceed had also been agreed and work would be completed by the end of July on what the centres of excellence would be. There would be clear alignment to the beacons and also lines into Schools. • Consideration was also being given to the University's Quality of Research (QR) strategy to ensure such funding was used effectively to support future research strength. • Current bidding and income data suggested that the stretch target to double research income by 2030 was unlikely to be achieved. Revised targets would be presented to the Board of Governors in due course. However, it was worth noting that UWE now had the third highest annual research income amongst post-1992 institutions behind Northumbria and Plymouth. Bidding and success rates were improving but the value of individual bids needed to be higher in order to sustain a strong research culture.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning for REF 2029 was underway, although it was unlikely that the rules would be clarified before the end of 2026. However, it was known that the size of the submission would be based on HESA staff data. To increase its size, it would be necessary to increase the number of staff with significant research responsibly submitted to HESA and this needed to be approached in a sustainable way. • Members' attention was also drawn to a new research film and banners celebrating UWE researchers and the University's focus on life-changing research.
AB.24.07.4.3.3	<p>Members noted in discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That the strategy was clear and that the film and banners were highly impactful, highlighting a range of people at all career stages. • That contract-related challenges for staff in technical roles made it difficult for them to become involved in research. The Technicians' Commitment was now beginning to have an impact in bringing technicians into research groups and internal funding schemes were seeing more bids from technical staff. However more could be done to cost technical time into external bids, recognising the changing nature of research capability, and to include technicians in publications.
AB.24.07.5	ITEMS FOR APPROVAL OR ENDORSEMENT
AB.24.07.5.1	Freedom of Speech Annual Report
	<i>Paper AB.24.05.07 was received.</i>
AB.24.07.5.1.1	The Chair presented the inaugural Freedom of Speech Annual Report, which set out how the institution was aligned to incoming legislative and regulatory requirements upon universities to protect freedom of speech and academic freedom as set out in the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023.
AB.24.07.5.1.2	Members heard that the impact of the new legislation would only become fully apparent as cases came forward and that the Office for Students' new Director of Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom had recognised this.
AB.24.07.5.1.3	<p>Members noted in discussion that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There would be a significant training need to support compliance across all staff and that requirements for different roles were being considered. • The interface with the University's work on anti-racism was complicated but the critical consideration had to be what was legal rather than what was uncomfortable to avoid a chilling effect on the free exchange of views. • Consideration was also being given to what training/ education was required for students, including how to build this into teaching materials. • That there ought to be scope for sector collaboration to develop training materials, but sector bodies had not sought to take a lead so far.
AB.24.07.5.1.4	The committee endorsed the report.

AB.24.07.5.2	<p>Committee Annual Reports</p> <p>Members considered annual reports from its standing thematic committees, which set out the how each had fulfilled its terms of reference during 2023/24 and had added value to the delivery of University strategy. Members noted progress with enhancement actions undertaken during the academic year and further work to be progressed during 2024/25.</p>
AB.24.07.5.2.1	<p><u>Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Committee</u> <i>Paper AB.24.07.08 was received.</i></p> <p>The committee endorsed the report, subject to clarification of whether its membership included a representative from Technical Services staff. [Action: Secretary; Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Provost]</p>
AB.24.07.5.2.2	<p><u>Strategic Academic Portfolio Group</u> <i>Paper AB.24.07.09 was received.</i></p> <p>The committee endorsed the report, subject to correction of a typographical error in Appendix 4. [Action: Secretary]</p>
AB.24.07.5.2.3	<p><u>University Ethics and Integrity Committee</u> <i>Paper AB.24.07.10 was received.</i></p> <p>The committee endorsed the report, noting that alignment of arrangements for the scrutiny of research ethics proposals to the new College structure was on track to be completed by 1 August, with a Worktribe ethics module also coming on stream from that point.</p>
AB.24.07.5.2.4	<p><u>Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee</u></p> <p>The committee noted that, due to a scheduling change, the Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee had only met earlier that day to consider its report and that it would be shared with members for review in due course. [Action: Secretary; Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Provost]</p>
AB.24.07.6	SUB-COMMITTEE REPORTING
AB.24.07.6.1	<p>Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Committee <i>Paper AB.24.07.11 was received.</i></p>
AB.24.07.6.1.1	Members noted the summary report of the meeting of 12 June 2024.
AB.24.07.6.2	<p>University Ethics and Integrity Committee <i>Paper AB.24.07.12 was received.</i></p>
AB.24.07.6.2.1	Members noted the summary report of the meeting of 16 April 2024.
AB.24.07.6.3	<p>Strategic Academic Portfolio Group <i>Paper AB.24.07.13 was received.</i></p>

AB.24.07.6.3.1	Members noted the summary report of the meeting of 18 June 2024.
AB.24.07.6.4	Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee
AB.24.07.6.4.1	Members noted that minutes of recent RKEC meetings were available for review on the committee's SharePoint site.
AB.24.07.7	DATE OF NEXT MEETING 9 July 2024 (joint strategic session with the Board of Governors), 12:45-14:15, EP1, Frenchay Campus