



Board of Governors

ACADEMIC BOARD

Minutes of the meeting held on 2 October 2024 in the Lecture Theatre of EP1 on Frenchay Campus.

Present: Steven West (Chair), Yvonne Beach, Georgie Benford, Peter Clegg, Amanda Coffey, Georgina Gough, Bernhard Gross, John Hancock, Khadiza Hossein, James Lee, Phil Legg, James Macdonald, Elena Marco, Cathy Minett-Smith, Kolawole Samuel Olure, Marcus Pugh, Andrew Simpson, Jackie Rogers, Sarah Voss, Jenni Wilkinson, Dan Wood

Apologies: Jacqueline Butler, Jason Briddon, Wendy Colvin, Jo Michell, Jo Midgley, Vlasios Sarantinos, Richard Strange, Nicola Temple

In attendance: Jodie Anstee, Rachel Cowie, Chris Gledhill, Katie Jenkins, Lizzie Johnson (item 6.2), Heather Moyes (Secretary), Ian Stratton (item 7.1), David Young (Officer)

Observers: None from the Board of Governors at this meeting

AB.24.10.1 WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

AB.24.10.1.1 The Chair welcomed members, especially those members new to their Academic Board roles in 2024/25. Apologies were noted.

AB.24.10.1.2 The Chair noted that, although a lay member of the Board of Governors representative was not present at the current meeting, such a representative would attend future sessions.

AB.24.10.1.3 The Chair explained to members the importance of declaring conflicts of interest. Any member with a substantive interest in the outcome of any agenda item must declare it. This stipulation is not at the expense of academic freedom or internal discussion. No declarations of interest were received.

AB.24.10.2 WORKSHOP/DEEP-DIVE

24.10.2.1

Academic governance and the role of Academic Board

Presentation.

AB.24.10.2.1.1

The Clerk to the Board of Governors and Academic Registrar presented an introductory/refresher session on the purpose of the University's academic governance arrangements, Academic Board's role in ensuring their effectiveness, and opportunities to further strengthen academic assurance at UWE Bristol.

AB.24.10.2.1.2

Members heard that:

- Academic governance is defined as the process in which there is oversight of academic activity within a teaching/research institution. It involves committees, policies, procedures and diverse key roles.
- It is vital that UWE, through its governance procedures, evidences robust standards, sound decision-making, long-term sustainability, compliance to regulations, a solid public trust, and a free and thriving academic community.
- UWE's Governance Framework connects academic governance (via Academic Board and its thematic committees and sub-committees) with corporate governance and the University's executive leadership (the VC).
- Assurance is not the same as reassurance or trust and it is a concept fundamental to effective governance, as it ensures that Academic Board bases its judgements on clear, objective and verifiable evidence. It requires the appropriate follow-through of policies, monitoring of development, and understanding of problems.
- Academic Board maps activities (e.g. APP, L&T quality) to the assurance required and how that assurance is evidenced (with emphasis on the Annual Quality Report).
- Academic Board receives assurance that the thematic committees are discharging their functions through having oversight of their business plans, terms of reference, minutes and regular reports. The cycle of business, mapped to the Academic Board's responsibilities, ensures effective consideration of strategy, in-depth exploration and scrutiny.
- The Board of Governors delivers feedback to Academic Board to indicate whether *they* are assured.
- Initial feedback from recent external reviews focuses on the need for training (both for new and continuing members), more efficient paperwork, clearer sightlines to and from sub-committees, fuller explanation of Chair's action decisions, and an articulated delegation framework.

AB.24.10.2.1.3 Members were asked to reflect on what they need to be able to fulfil their role (e.g. training and development) and to provide further information via a short survey that would be circulated after the meeting.

[Action: Secretary]

AB.24.10.2.1.4 The Chair concluded the discussion by stating that Academic Board has an important job which should be approached energetically. All members have a voice and an opportunity to contribute.

AB.24.10.3 ACADEMIC BOARD BUSINESS

AB.24.10.3.1 Academic Board terms of reference and membership 2024/25

Paper AB.24.10.01 was received.

AB.24.10.3.1.1 Members noted the terms of reference and membership, including minor changes to the job titles of two executive members and a slight revision to the Board's responsibilities to allow for the revocation of honorary academic titles, i.e. Emeritus/Emerita professors.

AB.24.10.3.1.2 The following vacancies in membership were noted:

- PVC Research – will remain vacant until further notice.
- Representative College Dean of Research and Enterprise – awaiting nomination from College of Business and Law.
- Student representatives (2 x UG, 1 x PGT, 1 x PGR) - to be in place by the December meeting of Academic Board, by which time the recruitment and training for Lead School Reps will be concluded.

AB.24.10.3.1.3 The Chair noted that, to further staff development, observers occasionally attend meetings.

AB.24.10.3.2 *Academic governance by-election results

Paper AB.24.10.02 was received.

AB.24.10.3.2.1 The results of the recent academic governance by-election were noted. The Chair congratulated Prof. Sarah Voss and Prof. Phil Legg for being elected to their positions of representative professor in CHSS and CATE respectively.

AB.24.10.3.3**Academic Board business plan 2024/25**

Paper AB.24.10.03 was received.

AB.24.10.3.3.1

The Secretary introduced the indicative business plan for the academic year, including suggested deep-dive topics aligned to the University Transformation Programme and the Creative and Cultural Plan.

AB.24.10.3.3.2

The Chair noted that deep dives help members understand the wider institutional context, monitor progress against strategic priorities and reflect on current practice. Certain matters could then be referred to the thematic committees for further investigation and/or taken forward in collaboration with the Students' Union.

AB.24.10.3.3.3

Members endorsed the plan.

AB.24.10.3.4**Sub-committee terms of reference and business plans**

Paper AB.24.10.04 was received.

AB.24.10.3.4.1

Members noted the terms of reference and the indicative business plans for the following committees that directly report to Academic Board.

1. Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Committee (LTSEC)
2. Strategic Academic Portfolio Group (SAPG)
3. University Ethics and Integrity Committee (UEIC)

AB.24.10.3.4.2

The Chair reminded members that Academic Board has overall responsibility for the academic governance structure, and it is important that the Board is confident that the committees acting on its behalf have clear responsibilities, the right memberships, and conduct appropriate business to be effective. Specifically on business plans, members of Academic Board were asked to consider whether the priorities are in line with the University's strategy.

AB.24.10.3.4.3

The Chair of LTSEC noted no substantive changes, with the business plan enhancing throughput to Academic Board. The Professor in Education for Sustainable Development volunteered to be a co-opted member to represent sustainability.

AB.24.10.3.4.4 **ACTION:** Committee Officer of LTSEC to arrange with LTSEC Secretary to co-opt the Professor in Education for Sustainable Development onto the committee in 2024/25 (**Officer**).

AB.24.10.3.4.5 The Chair of SAPG noted minor proposed amendments to the Terms of Reference and membership. The Secretary confirmed that the removal of SU representatives from SAPG was an early outcome of the Reimagining Student Representation Project and had been at the Students' Union's request. The SU would still receive papers and could be invited to attend for specific discussion items as appropriate.

AB.24.10.3.4.6 The Chair of UEIC noted minor proposed amendments to the Terms of Reference and membership to reflect the need to increase teaching representation on the committee.

AB.24.10.3.4.7 Members approved all terms of reference, were assured that the priorities were appropriate and approved the business plans.

It was noted that the first meeting of the Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee (RKEC) is not until 17 October so their Terms of Reference and business plan will come to Academic Board for approval in December.

AB.24.10.4 MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

AB.24.10.4.1 Previous minutes

Paper AB.24.10.05 was received.

AB.24.10.4.1.1 Members approved the minutes of the meeting held on 3 July 2024.

AB.24.10.4.2 Action sheet and matters arising

Paper AB.24.10.06 was received.

AB.24.10.4.2.1 Members noted that the majority of actions on the action sheet were now closed or not yet due.

AB.24.10.4.2.2 Members received a verbal update on the extension of late arrivals of international students. Members heard that students are arriving in significant numbers, despite continuing visa delays. Colleges were actively monitoring and managing the potential conflict between extending the late arrival deadline and the introduction of early assessment points as part of work to improve continuation rates.

AB.24.10.4.3***Chair's actions**

Paper AB.24.10.07 was received.

AB.24.10.4.3.1

Members noted the following items approved under Chair's action since the last meeting:

1. Single Tier Award Boards
2. Revisions to Terms of Reference of DASC
3. Emeritus Professor Appointment: Prof. Marie-Mulvey Roberts.
4. Emeritus Professor Appointments Procedure

AB.24.10.5**STANDING AGENDA ITEMS****AB.24.10.5.1****Vice-Chancellor's report**

Paper AB.24.10.08 was received.

AB.24.10.5.1.1

Members noted the report for information.

The Chair noted that his report covered the recent student recruitment position, in which UWE has performed well in maximising recruitment in a difficult environment, even though the figures are slightly below target.

The following comments were noted in discussion:

1. Numbers of international students relative to the total population are among the highest the University has ever had.
2. The ratio between international UG and PGT students has been rebalanced as there has been a steep decline observed in some PGT markets.

AB.24.10.5.2**The Students' Union report**

Paper AB.24.10.09 was received.

AB.24.10.5.2.1

The SU President and VP Education introduced their report, noting concerns with a recent change to the Reasonable Adjustment to Deadlines window from 14 to 7 days and potential impact on completion rates for those students who either have a formally registered disability or those who do not disclose a disability (but meet the definition).

AB.24.10.5.2.2

The following comments were made during discussion:

1. The change applies only to adjustments to deadlines for students experiencing unexpected difficulties. This

University process should be sharply distinguished from UWE Bristol's legal duty to make reasonable adjustments (RAs) in relation to learning, teaching and assessment to ensure disabled students are not disadvantaged through existing systems, practices and assessments.

2. The similar terminology used to describe the two different types of reasonable adjustment can be confusing, and an Academic Board task and finish group will be set up jointly with the Students' Union to look at, among other areas, communicating these issues with more effective language. The Chair confirmed that the group's membership will include EDI expertise, and further members will be decided upon in due course.
3. Avoiding a situation whereby students are compelled to make multiple RA to deadline applications at the same time could be considered as part of this work.

ACTION: Establishment of a joint task and finish group with the Students' Union on the impact of the Reasonable Adjustment to Deadline procedures, reporting progress periodically back to Academic Board (**Secretary/Deputy Registrar/VP Education**).

AB.24.10.5.3

Thematic sub-committee business reports

Papers AB.24.10.10-13 were received.

AB.24.10.5.3.1

Members were updated on the business considered and the decisions and recommendations taken by the thematic sub-committees of Academic Board. The summary reports were presented as evidence that the University activity delegated by Academic Board to its thematic committees was being appropriately scrutinised and/or progressed.

AB.24.10.5.3.2

The Chair of LTSEC noted that the meeting on the 11 September 2024 explored in depth the Mental Health Charter, as well as considering reports from the Students' Union an update on NSS and PTES and strategy for the 2025 course survey. LTSEC was assured that arrangements for managing student casework, including cases referred to the OIA, were effective. Changes to the Reasonable Adjustment to Deadline process were also discussed.

Escalation to Academic Board:

1. Terms of Reference/Business Plan (see item 24.10.3.4).
2. Student coursework report (see item 24.10.7.1).

3. Access and Participation Plan Overview (appendix to current item - endorsed for escalation paper to Board of Governors [**Action:** Secretary]).

AB.24.10.5.3.3

The Chair of RKEC noted the latest available business report covered the July 2024 meeting, as the first RKEC meeting of the 2024/25 academic year was not taking place until 17 October. The July meeting received an update from the Doctoral Academy, as well as on new promotional materials about UWE's research impact, which were now on display across campus.

Escalation to Academic Board:

1. 2023/24 Annual Assurance Report (appendix to current item – endorsed by Academic Board).

AB.24.10.5.3.4

The Chair of SAPG noted that the meeting on the 17 September 2024 considered the School Roadmaps, with substantial discussion on more consistent presentation, as well as the 2024/26 Strategic Plan and portfolio performance and market attractiveness.

Escalation to Academic Board:

1. Terms of Reference/Business Plan (see item 24.10.3.4).
2. Programme Closures and Approvals, 2023/24 (appendix to current item – for note).

AB.24.10.5.3.5

The Chair of UEIC noted that a substantial discussion was held on ethical considerations, with the defence industry and international teaching partnerships identified as exemplars for ongoing discussion, alongside consideration of escalated ethics applications. The establishment of the new College Research Ethics Committees was confirmed, with key positions filled (together with scrutiny panels). A shortfall of trained scrutineers was noted, and Colleges were reminded to ensure consistent use of the Research Governance Record. Positive feedback was received on the new Worktribe research management module.

Escalation to Academic Board:

1. Terms of Reference/Business Plan (see item 24.10.3.4).

AB.24.10.5.3.6

Members of Academic Board were confirmed that they were assured with regards to the delegated academic activities of the thematic sub-committees (pending assurance on RKEC Terms of Reference and Business Plan at the next Academic Board).

[**Action:** DVC-Provost; Secretary]

AB.24.10.6**STRATEGY 2023 AND 2024-26 PLAN****AB.24.10.6.1****2024-26 Strategic Plan and internal governance**

Paper AB.24.10.14 was received.

AB.24.10.6.1.1

Academic Board was asked to note an update on the 2024-26 Strategic Plan and internal governance oversight.

AB.24.10.6.1.2

Members were provided with a confirmed set of priorities and the means for oversight of implementation through the University's internal governance arrangements. Members were also advised that work is underway to strengthen/ensure consistency of review of the critical actions associated with academic strategic and tactical risks.

AB.24.10.6.2**Anti-racism strategy and guiding principles**

Paper AB.24.10.15 was received.

AB.24.10.6.2.1

The Chief People Officer and Head of EDI & Health and Wellbeing Strategy presented the University's anti-racism strategy and guiding principles.

AB.24.10.6.2.2

The following aims of the Strategy were noted:

- To create an anti-racist environment recognising that this is an ongoing journey for the University.
- To eradicate racial discrimination in all its forms.
- To ensure that all staff and students are safe on campus and feel that they belong in the University.
- To advance equity of opportunities for Global Majority students and staff – through policies, systems, practices and behaviours.
- To embed a culture of accountability and transparency – individual, collective and organisational actions to promote anti-racism.

AB.24.10.6.2.3

The following guiding principles of the Strategy were then discussed:

- To prioritise anti-racism.
- To investigate racial inequity.
- To implement policies, practices and systems that promote racial equity.
- To make measurable progress.

AB.24.10.6.2.4 These principles will be embedded into the following four workstreams:

- 1) Curriculum, practice and research.
- 2) Culture and belonging.
- 3) Staff diversity and development.
- 4) Leadership.

AB.24.10.6.2.5 The following comments/observations were made:

- 1) It was confirmed that significant student feedback had been elicited on the newly adopted "Global Majority" terminology.
- 2) There has been some progress in awarding gaps, but the 2023-24 data has yet to be released or discussed at LTSEC.
- 3) Clarity was given on the EDI Advisory Group, the purpose of which is to help provide assurance rather than acting as an additional formal decision-making group.
- 4) Further information on who is involved in these consultations would be helpful and aid transparency.

AB.24.10.6.2.6 The Chair thanked the authors of the strategy for their extensive work, which will now be considered by the People, Culture, Quality and Standards Committee and then the Board of Governors in November. However, there is a long way to go, and all UWE staff members need to play their part.

AB.24.10.7 ITEMS FOR APPROVAL OR ENDORSEMENT

AB.24.10.7.1 Casework Annual Report 2023/24

Paper AB.24.10.15 was received.

AB.24.10.7.1.1 The Head of Student and Academic Policy Enhancement introduced the paper: an executive summary of the report previously endorsed by LTSEC after detailed consideration.

AB.24.10.7.1.2 Members were assured that:

1. Significant progress had been made during 2023/24 to improve the University's management of formal student casework leading to fewer cases, earlier interventions, effective support for students, a significant reduction in the backlog of cases, a de-escalation of fitness to study cases, a quicker resolution of complaints and academic appeals, and a better understanding of trends.
2. The increase in the issue of completion of procedures letters, which enable students to seek review of their case by the

Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA), is not considered a negative metric, as reaching the end of UWE's internal processes in a timely manner is of benefit to students, and UWE welcomes feedback.

3. The statistical increases in discrimination/hate, sexual harassment and "spiking" reports show that work to encourage students to report incidents continues to be effective.

AB.24.10.7.1.3 The DVC Registrar commended the quality of the casework report and insights now provided and noted that the assurance lines of sight leading up to Board of Governors are clear. The Chair also commended the Head of Student and Academic Policy Enhancement on his work and that of the Casework Team.

AB.24.10.7.1.3 Members endorsed the report for onward submission to the Board of Governors.
[ACTION: Secretary]

AB.24.10.7.2 Academic Governance Annual Assurance Report, 2023/24
Paper AB.24.10.17 was received.

AB.24.10.7.2.1 The Secretary introduced the paper. Members were invited to consider the report for submission to the Board of Governors in line with its responsibilities under Condition E2 of registration with the OfS.

AB.24.10.7.2.2 Members were informed that the constitution and operation of Academic Board, as well as the effectiveness of wider academic governance arrangements, were green RAG-rated, with clear sightlines of assurance evidenced. Student representation is still amber rated, but significant advances have been made because of the joint SU-University representation project, which is expected to provide tangible benefits in 2024/25.

AB.24.10.7.2.3 The report was endorsed by Academic Board for onward submission to the Board of Governors.
[ACTION: Secretary]

AB.24.10.8 ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

AB.24.10.8.1 Policy Governance Framework: implementation report
Paper AB.24.10.18 was received.

AB.24.10.8.1.1 The Academic Registrar introduced the report, noting that the Policy Governance Framework supports Academic Board's oversight of policies within its remit, including those delegated to the thematic committees.

AB.24.10.8.1.2 The Board was invited to note the policies due for review during 2024/25. The status of three policies was subject to confirmation and the register will be updated once this is clarified.
[Action: Secretary]

AB.24.10.09 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

None to report.

AB.24.10.10 DATE(S) OF NEXT MEETING(S)

AB.24.10.10.1 Next meeting dates for academic year 2024/25:

- 11 December 2024
- 26 February 2025
- 7 May 2025
- 2 July 2025
- 8 July 2025 (joint session with the Board of Governors)