UWE Bristol | University of the West of England

ACADEMIC BOARD

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 17 May 2023

Present:	Amanda Coffey (Chair), Roshin Chummun, Sally Clark, Wendy Colvin, Lily Diyemowei, Olena Doran, Gareth Edwards, John Griffiths, Marc Griffiths, Vanique Kruger, Mandy Lee, James Macdonald, Lyn Newton, Paul Olomolaiye, Rania Regaieg, Jackie Rogers, Jim Smith, Emma Weitkamp, Neil Willey
In attendance:	Jodie Anstee, Rachel Cowie, Jack Christie, Charlotte Evans, Chris Gledhill, John Hancock, Katie Jenkins, Heather Moyes (Secretary), Mark Shand, Richard Strange
Apologies:	Yvonne Beach, Paul Bennett, Hilary Drew, Elena Marco, Jo Midgley, Sadie Trent, Steven West
Observers:	Domini Harewood (Board of Governors)

AB.23.05.1	**WORKSHOP**

AB.23.05.1.1	**Artificial Intelligence: Opportunities and Challenges for Higher Education**
	Paper AB.23.05.01 was received.
	
	Academic Board considered a series of presentations from staff concerning the impact of recent advances in Artificial Intelligence (AI) on higher education, in particular for learning and teaching. Key themes that emerged from the presentations included:
	  i. The likelihood that AI tools would soon be embedded into standard general use software for generating a range of audio and visual content, which would necessitate a re-articulation of the distinctive skills that universities developed in their students, with less focus on writing/creating and more on critiquing.
	  ii. Questions around student and staff readiness to engage with learning and assessment in this new context and to understand the risks around quality, reliability and bias in the outputs generative AI tools produced.
	  iii. The speed with which the technology was evolving and the challenge for universities of adapting policy to keep up.
	  iv. Risks around digital poverty and variable student access to high quality AI tools, which tended to be offered via "paid for" platforms.
	  v. Opportunities arising from AI for authenticity in assessment.
	  vi. The need to support students to use AI effectively.

AB.23.05.1.2	Members noted the establishment of a new Community of Practice to support staff to develop practice in relation to AI in learning and teaching.

AB.23.05.1.3	Academic Board members worked in groups to reflect on questions concerning how UWE should position itself in relation to latest developments in AI, major opportunities for learning, teaching and research, how to support staff and students tot use AI effectively and ethically and how Academic Board could gain assurance that the opportunities and risk associated with AI were being managed effectively.

AB.23.05.2   Key points noted included:

i. The importance of working collaboratively as a sector to address the challenges ahead
ii. The critical need to reconsider assessment, focusing on opportunities to rethink approaches rather than risks associated with trying to continue with current models of assessment, including concern to avoid a return to controlled condition examinations as a quick fix response
iii. Significant potential to use AI positively to enhance learning, teaching and assessment, as well as improving the efficiency of support services
iv. The need for a practice-based institution like UWE to embrace AI as a core tool for the workplace and to ensure our students understand how to use it effectively and ethically and to apply it to best effect within their chosen fields
v. The need to consider what AI means for graduate skills, generally and with different professions
vi. The impact that AI will have on research, both in terms of conducting research and in preparing grant applications, and how we continue to ensure and assess originality
vii. The need to invest now in developing staff and student understanding of AI.

AB.23.05.3	**WELCOME AND APOLOGIES**
AB.23.05.3.1.1.	**Welcome to members**
	The Chair welcomed the new members of Academic Board and those that were observing the meeting.
AB.23.05.3.1.2.	**Apologies for absence**
	The Chair noted all apologies.
AB.23.05.3.1.3.	**Declaration of interests**
	No declarations of interest were notified.

AB.23.05.4	**MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING**
AB.23.05.4.1	**Previous Minutes**
	Paper AB.23.05.02 was received.
	Members confirmed the minutes of the meeting of 1 March 2023 as an accurate record.

AB.23.05.4.2	**Action Sheet and Matters Arising** *Paper AB.23.05.03 was received*

The Chair noted all outstanding actions on the Action Sheet and their progress to date.

Members noted that an update on implementation of the Research Strategy would be brought to the next meeting of the committee.
[Action: Deputy Vice Chancellor/ Secretary]

AB.23.05.4.3	**Chair's Actions** *Papers AB.23.05/4a and AB.23.05.4b were received.*

Members noted that the Chair had approved two appointments to the role of Emeritus Professor since the last meeting as follows:
- Professor Tim Hughes
- Professor John Parkin

AB.23.05.5	**STANDING AGENDA ITEMS**
AB.23.05.5.1	**Update from the Vice-Chancellor** *Paper AB.23.03.15 was received.*

Academic Board noted the Vice-Chancellor's update.

AB.23.05.5.2	**Update from the Students' Union** *Paper AB.23.05.05 was received.*

AB.23.05.5.2.1.	The Students' Union President updated Academic Board on the Union's activities, noting that this would be the final report from this year's sabbatical officer team.

AB.23.05.5.2.2.	Attention was drawn to:

    i. Developments in the National Union of Students
    ii. The outcome of the 2023 Students' Union at UWE leadership race
    iii. Recent UWE Student Council discussions regarding the benefits and challenges of AI for students
    iv. The recent Student Experience and Student Welfare Awards.

AB.23.05.5.2.3.	The Chair thanked the outgoing Presidents' Team for their work and commended the President for her recent appearance before the House of Lords Select Committee regarding the role of the Office for Students.

AB.23.05.6	**ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION**
AB.23.05.6.1	**Academic Calendar, 2023/24** *Paper AB.23.05.06 was received.*

AB.23.05.6.1.1.	Academic Board considered the proposed academic calendar for 2023/24, which had been reviewed in detail in response to extensive feedback.

AB.23.05.6.1.2.   Members heard that the aim was to offer maximum flexibility for individual programmes. Key features included:

i.   More frequent assessment boards to flatten peaks in workload
ii. Flexibility as to when resits could be scheduled
iii. Each programme to have an Enrichment Week during which a range of supportive interventions and activities could be held, with programme teams to determine the appropriate timing
iv. Promotion of an "assessment as learning" model, with no defined assessment periods and no requirement to focus assessment at the end of a module
v.   Increased time before boards for marking.

AB.23.05.6.1.3.   In the course of discussion, members noted:
i.   Student concerns about receiving feedback directly before the Christmas vacation, which limited their ability to seek additional guidance in a timely manner
ii. A view that the UWE academic year started much later than other institutions and that it would be preferable if semester one could be completed before Christmas
iii. The need to consider partner academic calendars the main UWE calendar
iv. The value of being able to take students through boards earlier in the academic year and to hold resits closer to the first sit
v.   General support from the Students' Union for the proposed Enrichment Week, but a concern that it might not be protected as intended. It was confirmed that some programmes might need to hold examinations during this period, but otherwise the ambition was to keep it clear for enrichment activities
vi. The impact of allowing late registrations, both on those students themselves and on the wider cohort. Members head that this was a necessity currently because of UK government delays in issuing visas and a complete end to the practice would have a major impact on student recruitment, but that more consideration was being given to the support needs of students starting late
vii. Calls from some students to reduce Starting Block to a one-week activity
viii. That the flexibility the proposed changes allowed was welcomed.

AB.23.05.6.1.4.   Members agreed that the Deputy Registrar and Deputy Vice Chancellor would consider whether it might be possible to commence teaching a week earlier and would seek approval of the final version for the 2023/24 calendar by Chair's action.
[ACTION: Deputy Registrar]

AB.23.05.6.1.5.   It was further agreed that the proposed calendar for 2024/25 onwards would be presented early in 2023/24, in order to support forward planning.
[Action: Deputy Registrar/ Secretary]

AB.23.05.6.2   **Examination Boards**
Paper AB.23.05.07 was received.

AB.23.05.6.2.1.   The committee considered proposed revisions to the operation of Examination Boards.

AB.23.05.6.2.2.   Members heard that Field Boards currently spent considerable time confirming marks, leaving little time for consideration of module performance data as a result. The proposal was to undertake mark confirmation outside of the Boards themselves and to focus Board meetings on modules with missing marks or other issues. Field External Examiners would no longer be required to attend Field Boards but instead would engage with module leaders a part of a continual, quality-focused relationship.

AB.23.05.6.2.3.   In addition, new Enhancement Boards would be established to consider and analyse module performance data and identify actions to enhance module learning and teaching and determine any changes required prior to the next module run.

AB.23.05.6.2.4.   Members noted in discussion:
   i.   That there would be more frequent boards, meaning student marks could be considered in a timely manner
   ii. Detailed terms of reference for Enhancement Boards were in development and it would be important to ensure that they continued to meet PSRB requirements and that External Examiner feedback was captured appropriately
   iii. There would be value in ensuring Enhancement Boards could consider both first sit and resit data, in order to gain an accurate picture of module performance.

AB.23.05.6.2.5.   The committee approved the proposed changes for implementation from 2023/24 onwards.

AB.23.05.6.3   **Degree Outcomes Statement 2023**
Paper AB.05.08 was received.

AB.23.05.6.3.1.   The committee considered the 2023 Degree Outcomes Statement and associated analysis covering the 2021/22 graduating cohort, noting that the Statement and analysis had been considered in detail by the Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Sub-Committee.

AB.23.05.6.3.2.   The committee endorsed the Statement and analysis for onward consideration by the Board of Governors.

AB.23.05.6.4   **Revisions to academic regulations for postgraduate research degrees**
Paper AB.23.05.09 was received.

AB.23.05.6.4.1.   The committee considered proposed revisions to the academic regulations governing postgraduate research degrees, noting that the proposals had been considered in detail by the Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Committee.

AB.23.05.6.4.2.   Members heard that the proposed changes would:
  i.   increase supervisory capacity by no longer requiring that at least one member of a supervisory team had previous experience of supervising a successful doctorate at UWE or another UK university
  ii. simplify and make fairer the research project confirmation arrangements for postgraduate research students
  iii. clarify progression examination arrangements
  iv. change the maximum registration period for a part-time PhD from six to seven years in line with the sector norm.

AB.23.05.6.4.3.   The committee approved the changes.

AB.23.05.6.5   **Variant Regulations: Neusoft Institute (NUIT), China – Joint Education Programme**
Paper AB.23.05.09 was received.

Academic Board approved a proposal for variant regulations in relation to the School of Computing and Creative Technologies' partnership with Neusoft Institute, Guangdong, China (NUIT) to deliver UWE Bristol's first Joint Education Programme (JEP), noting that the proposal had been considered in detail by the University Quality and Standards Sub-Committee.

AB.23.05.6.6   **Student Protection Plan**
Paper AB.23.05.11 was received.

AB.23.05.6.6.1.   The committee considered updates to the Student Protection Plan in light of a changed risk profile for institutions following the Covid-19 pandemic and additional risks around cybersecurity and industrial action.

AB.23.05.6.6.2.   Members approved the revised plan, subject to minor amendments to correct language in relation to the University's Tier 4 UKVI licence.
[Action: Secretary]

AB.23.05.6.6.3.   Members were reminded that students were made aware of the Plan and of any changes to it through the Terms and Conditions to which they signed up annually and via an annual letter advising them of any changes to policies or to their programmes.

AB.23.05.6.7   **Academic Committee Calendar, 2023/24**
Paper AB.23.05.12 was received.

AB.23.05.6.7.1.   Academic Board approved the academic governance committee calendar for 2023/24.

AB.23.05.6.7.2.   Members noted that:
  i.   The timing of the final meeting each year fell just at the point of handover from one Students' Union Presidents Team to the next

and that attention would be paid to ensuring the new intake was supported to engage.
[Action: Secretary]

ii. The timing of meetings for the new University Ethics and Integrity Committee remained subject to confirmation.

AB.23.05.6.8	**Academic Governance Committee elections timeline 2023** *Paper AB.23.05.13 was received.*

The committee endorsed the proposed timeline for the election of committee members to vacancies on Academic Board and relevant sub-committees for 2023/24.
[Action: Secretary]

AB.23.05.7	**ITEMS FOR NOTE**
AB.23.05.7.1	**Summary Reports from Sub-Committees** *Papers AB.23.03.13/14/15 were received.*

Members noted summary reports from sub-committees as follows:
  ▪ LTSEC (19 April 2023)

AB.23.05.8	**ANY OTHER BUSINESS**
AB.23.05.8.1	Concerns were raised that the data currently presented to module leaders regarding in-module student performance gaps did not marry up well with degree classification data and so was not supporting work to address degree outcome gaps.
AB.23.05.8.2	Members agreed that further work was required to consider the data requirements in this regard and that the matter should be brought back to a future meeting for more detailed review. **[Action: Deputy Vice Chancellor/ Deputy Registrar/ Secretary]**

DATES OF 2022/23 MEETINGS
  • Wednesday 5 July 2023
  • Tuesday 11 July 2023 (with Board of Governors)