

ACADEMIC BOARD

CONFIRMED

Minutes of the Academic Board held on Tuesday 10 December, 2019.

Present: Paul Bennett, Martin Boddy, Sally Clark, Lisa Cole, Hazel Edwards, Marc Griffiths, Elena Marco, Fidel Meraz, Jo Midgley, Christopher Moore, James Murphy, Jane Ojiako, Paul Olomolaiye, Precious Onyenekwu Tatah, Carinna Parraman, Gerry Rice, Sarah Todd, Steven West (Chair), Neil Willey.

In attendance: Jodie Anstee, Rachel Cowie, Chris Gledhill, Heather Moyes (Secretary), Amanda Oliver (Deputy Secretary)

Apologies: Jason Briddon, Elizabeth Cleaver, Peter Clegg, Mandy Lee, Sam Louwers, Candida McCabe, Ray McDowell, Favour Oweisana, Jane Roscoe, Nicholas Ryder, Jeanette Sakel, Patricia Voaden, Katie Jenkins and Richard Strange.

Absent: Sanja Dogramadzi, Sonja Dragojlovic-Oliveira, Aylwin Yafele

AB 19.12.1 WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

AB 19.12.1.1 The Chair welcomed members to the meeting and announced that apologies had been received from:

Jason Briddon, Elizabeth Cleaver, Peter Clegg, Mandy Lee, Sam Louwers, Candida McCabe, Ray McDowell, Favour Oweisana, Jane Roscoe, Nicholas Ryder, Jeanette Sakel, Patricia Voaden, Katie Jenkins and Richard Strange.

AB 19.12.1.2 He also introduced Sonia Mills, Chair of the Board of Governors, who was attending the meeting as an observer.

AB 19.12.1.3 No declarations of interest were received.

AB 19.12.2 MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

Paper AB 19/12/01 and Paper AB 19/12/02 were received.

AB 19.12.2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 9 October, 2019 were **approved** as a true and accurate record of discussions. The Chair also confirmed that Aylwin Yafele had given apologies.

AB 19.12.2.2 ***Action Sheet and Matters Arising**
Academic Board noted actions arising from the previous meeting had been completed.

AB 19.12.2.3 **Chair's Actions**
Members of Academic Board were informed that an amended Emeritus Professor application for Professor Jon Tucker had been approved via Chair's Action.

AB 19.12.3 STANDING AGENDA ITEMS

AB 19.12.3.1 Update from the Vice Chancellor

Paper AB 19/12/03 was received

AB 19.12.3.1.1 The Vice Chancellor advised members that:

- The Board of Governors had approved the Annual Academic Assurance Report from Academic Board. He highlighted the summary of outcomes which had been included in the final report but had been unavailable at the previous meeting. He noted that only 19% of annual monitoring reports had been completed for partnership provision by the deadline and that LTSEC would oversee work to enhance how UWE monitors performance and quality outcomes for students undertaking UWE degrees in overseas partnerships;
- The Office for Students (OfS) had held a series of briefing sessions for Accountable Officers outlining arrangements for monitoring an institution's continued compliance with the ongoing conditions of registration and their approach to intervention;
- The closure of the Alexandra Warehouse was a OfS reportable event and a University project board was overseeing withdrawal from the Gloucester Campus. The project board was responsible for ensuring the University is compliant with its approved Student Protection Plan and the wider student communication plans agreed by the OfS. He reported that the Office for Students continues to engage with the University, as a low risk monitoring, to ensure the Student Protection Plan is followed;
- Industrial action at UWE Bristol in relation to the 2019 pay deal was unlikely as none of the Trade Unions reached the 50% level of turnout required for lawful industrial action;
- Professor Amanda Coffey, currently Pro Vice-Chancellor for Student Experience and Academic Standards at Cardiff University, had been appointed as Deputy Vice Chancellor and would take up post at UWE Bristol on 1 April.

AB 19.12.3.2 Update from UWE Student Representatives

Paper AB 19/12/04 was received

AB 19.12.3.2.1 The President and Vice President: Education of the Students' Union provided a progress update on their recent activities and achievements. This included:

- Extending the opening hours of the Student Union building to 08:30 – 20:00 during weekdays to support students who chose to use it as a place of study;
- Plans to provide a mini bus service from Bower Ashton to the city centre and possibly Frenchay campus at 8:00pm and 9:00pm Mondays to Fridays – following feedback from students on bus times from Bower Ashton;
- Engaging with students and encouraging them to register to vote in the general election;
- Hosting a conference for Student Representatives with sessions from academic staff, professional services staff and external speakers, with plans to increase this to two conferences for the next academic year - one in late November and the second in late February;
- Organising the first Student Representative Committee for this Academic Year. They reported that the results for the Department Representative elections were announced at the Committee and whilst some positions remained vacant they had elected department representatives for Diversity and Inclusivity, Sustainability and Academic Processes. It was also highlighted that the list of department representatives (volunteers) and lead department representatives (paid staff) could be found on the SU website.

<https://www.thestudentsunion.co.uk/representation/reps/student-reps/leadreps/>

AB 19.12.3.2.2 The Chair also noted that the Students Union had produced a newsletter for the University which was very useful - he thanked the President and Vice President: Education for their contributions.

AB 19.12.4 ITEMS FOR APPROVAL OR ENDORSEMENT

AB 19.12.4.1 Academic Governance: Terms of Reference for Committees and Boards

Paper AB 19/12/05 was received

AB 19.12.4.1.1 The Director of Student and Academic Services advised that each Board and Committee in the new academic governance structure had been presented with their respective terms of reference for adoption. She reported that the majority of Committees/Boards were content to adopt their Terms of Reference subject to minor adjustments to membership and the removal of standard terms which were not applicable to specific committees. She reported that more significant feedback was received from committees with a research focus, for example, changes to the reporting lines for Faculty Research Ethics Committees. She noted that these requests had now been addressed and resolved (Table 2 of paper).

AB 19.12.4.1.2 Academic Board approved the suggested amendments to the draft Terms of Reference with the following caveats:

- That the Terms of reference were kept under review for the next Academic Year and if further changes were required the Terms of Reference would need to be returned to Academic Board;
- Changes to the Terms of Reference for Academic Board to reflect that members of the Board of Governors attend as observers;
- Clarification that co-opted members are appointed by their respective Board or Committee;
- Academic Board agreed to an extended transition period for the implementation of the new Programme Management Committee and Student Representative Staff Forum arrangements, to clarify their respective responsibilities and ensure they both add value. It was agreed that the focus should be on effectiveness and the need to avoid duplication of effort and unnecessary burdens on staff or students.

ACTION: Secretary and Deputy Secretary Academic Board

AB 19.12.4.2 Election Results

Paper AB 19/12/06 was received

AB 19.12.4.2.1 Academic Board received and noted the outcome of the elections for vacancies in the new academic governance structure.

AB 19.12.4.2.2 The Director of Student and Academic Services reported that following the Elections a number of vacancies remain unfilled. She expressed her concern about the number of nominations received and the lack of engagement in the process.

AB 19.12.4.2.3 She noted that the elections procedures were being revised and asked for feedback from anyone who found the nominations process onerous. To increase engagement it was proposed that encouragement could be given to individuals to nominate themselves in PDRs and discussed as part of development opportunities.

AB 19.12.4.2.4 It was also suggested there would be more engagement if the elections for Faculty Boards were run from the Faculty.

AB 19.12.4.2.5 Academic Board approved the recommendation for the remaining vacancies to be filled by appointment, for this academic year, on the understanding that further elections would be held towards the end of 2019/20 academic year.

AB 19.12.4.2.6 It was also agreed that Faculties would explore with the Secretary the potential for them to taken on direct responsibility for running elections to their Faculty Boards.

ACTION: Faculty Deans and Secretary Academic Board

AB 19.12.4.3 **Assurance Framework and Approach to Effectiveness Reviews**
Paper AB 19/12/07 was received

AB 19.12.4.3.1 The Deputy Director (Policy and Student Experience) informed Academic Board that the Assurance Framework had been developed in response to the requirements for Academic Board to provide assurance to Board of Governors in respect of the University's academic activity and was aligned to the Board's role in ensuring compliance with the ongoing conditions of registration with the Office for Students. The Framework was aimed at ensuring and facilitating the provision of a timely and robust Annual Academic Assurance Report for Board of Governors.

AB 19.12.4.3.2 Academic Board were advised that the purpose of the Framework was to:

- Specify the reports through which Academic Board assures itself that it has met its obligations and so can provide assurance to the Board of Governors;
- Define the annual cycle for the preparation and scrutiny of reports to be considered through the academic governance structures;
- Avoid unnecessary duplication of effort by ensuring scrutiny occurs in line with delegation of powers as set out in committee terms of reference;
- Set baseline requirements for oversight and continued enhancement of the good functioning of the academic governance arrangements.

AB 19.12.4.3.3 Academic Board were also told that the Framework identified two main types of report:

- Committee Annual Assurance Reports – through which committees/sub-committees provide assurance to their senior committee that they have operated effectively and inclusively and have delivered value in line with their terms of reference.
- Thematic Annual Assurance Reports – through which assurance is provided that major areas of policy, procedure or practice for which Academic Board has responsibility have been governed and managed effectively.

AB 19.12.4.3.4 Academic Board approved the proposed Framework and Approach to Effectiveness Reviews.

AB 19.12.4.3.5 Whilst it was recognised that the OfS timescales were subject to change, it was confirmed that a clear timeline would be constructed around this.

AB 19.12.4.3.6 The Chair clarified that Academic Board and Board of Governors could also commission thematic reports on strategic themes and Faculty Boards should be engaged in this process.

AB 19.12.4.4 **Update on the Academic Regulatory Framework Review**
Paper AB 19/12/08 was received

AB 19.12.4.4.1 Members were advised that the purpose of the report was to update members on the progress of the academic regulatory review and to request approval for proposals for a new regulatory framework.

- AB 19.12.4.4.2 The Chair provided the context for the review, its aims and objectives and its importance for the University. He reported that the previous set of regulations were complicated and had evolved over time. He advised Academic Board that:
- The new regulations were aimed at simplicity, transparency and supporting student success;
 - The changes would need careful management and training would be provided for academic staff, officers, administrators, chairs and external reviewers to ensure a smooth transition;
 - Students having clarity on the purpose of academic regulations, their importance and how they impact them was a critical part of the review aims;
 - The risks associated with the changes were high and all stakeholders needed a full understanding of the regulations;
 - An assessment had been undertaken to decide which regulations could be implemented early and those needing additional work;
 - The framework had been discussed with Unison and UCU.
- AB 19.12.4.4.3 The Director of Student and Academic Services advised members that:
- The framework had been discussed at the Academic Quality and Regulation Operational Group, confirmed by the Academic Quality and Regulation Steering Group and endorsed strongly by the Learning Teaching and Student Experience Committee;
 - The new framework would be introduced in September 2022 but approval by Academic Board was needed now to ensure the agreed proposals inform the configuration of the new Student Information and Records Management system;
 - Subject to approval of the regulations by Academic Board, the detailed work to plan and prepare for the implementation of the new regulations would commence in January 2020;
 - The introduction of uncapped resits was sector leading in the UK, but in Europe this was normal practice;
 - Transparency for staff and students was very important;
 - Academic Board and LTSEC would receive updates on these plans as they develop.
- AB 19.12.4.4.4 The Academic Regulations and Policy Manager reported that the team would be working with Faculties over the next three years to plan academic workloads. Members were reminded that the new framework would enable a different approach to assessment and would also support and enable the University's commitment to delivering a more personalised student experience. It was noted that the workload for staff had been a serious consideration in reviewing the regulations and the University had discussed this with UCU.
- AB 19.12.4.4.5 Academic Board was also advised that a detailed communications plan would run alongside the implementation of the regulations.
- AB 19.12.4.4.6 Academic Board approved the proposals.
- ACTION: Academic Regulations and Policy Manager**
- AB 19.12.4.5 **Academic Regulation Variant Request**
Paper AB 19/12/09 was received
- AB 19.12.4.5.1 Academic Board approved a request for a variant academic regulation for the Post Graduate Certificate in Education (International Early Years) which was a full-time, one year distance-learning programme where students would teach in a school with an international focus. It was reported that whilst successful completion of the programme would not confer Qualified Teacher Status, the programme responds to the University's ambition to transform futures and find solutions to global challenges.

ACTION: Academic Regulations and Policy Manager

AB 19.12.5 ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

AB 19.12.5.1 Strategy 2030 – Development of Supporting Strategies and Plans

Paper AB 19/12/10 was received

AB 19.12.5.1.1 The Vice Chancellor advised Academic Board that as part of the work on Strategy 2030 a series of supporting strategies and plans were being developed. He highlighted the proposed timeline for completing this work and the approval route for each strategy and plan - the main final approval route being the Board of Governors strategic away day in March.

AB 19.12.5.1.2 He noted that the strategies and plan had been grouped according to whether they were core supporting strategies, thematic strategies or enabling plans, namely:

Core supporting strategies:

1. Transforming Futures Learning Strategy
2. Transforming Futures Research and Enterprise Strategy
3. Transforming Futures Civic Engagement Strategy

Thematic supporting strategies:

4. Transforming Futures Health and Wellbeing Strategy
5. Transforming Futures EDI Strategy
6. Transforming Futures Climate Action and Sustainability Strategy

Enabling plans:

7. Transforming Futures Regional Partnerships Plan
8. Transforming Futures International Plan
9. Transforming Futures People Plan
10. Transforming Futures Campus Environments and Infrastructure Plan

AB 19.12.5.1.3 He also explained that the high-level timeline for the development of the strategies and plans would be further developed as the approach to consultation and engagement were confirmed.

AB 19.12.5.1.4 The Vice Chancellor highlighted the design principles underpinning the delivery of Strategy 2030 and the key goals associated with the supporting strategies and plans in a presentation. The main points focused on the strategies and plans:

- Having simplicity, to appeal to a variety of audiences;
- Providing clear lines of sight for assurance frameworks and enhancing accountability;
- Supporting transparency, inclusivity and learning;
- Being digitally agile;
- Ensuring policies across the University are consistent, agile and aligned to process and practice;
- Supporting partnerships and collaboration within and outside of the University;
- Aligning with city region strategies and plans;
- Addressing inconsistencies;
- Providing first class student experience and “ready and able graduates;”
- Supporting impactful research which links local and global around civic engagement.

AB 19.12.5.1.5 It was agreed the presentation would be circulated following the meeting.

ACTION: Deputy Secretary Academic Board

AB 19.12.5.2 Update on TEF (verbal)

AB 19.12.5.2.1 The Director of Student and Academic Services advised members that the University was working on the premise that Subject TEF would happen in 2021 and was working with Faculties accordingly to draft subject submissions. She reported that if Subject TEF did not proceed, the information gathered would still be useful for Institutional TEF.

AB 19.12.5.2.2 The Chair confirmed that the report from the Independent Review of TEF conducted by Professor Dame Shirley Pearce had been submitted to government. She noted that the early indications were Subject TEF was unlikely to happen in 2021 due to concerns around the reliability of the data which could leave the sector open to judicial review.

AB 19.12.5.3 Complaints and Appeals Annual Report

Paper AB 19/12/11 was received

AB 19.12.5.3.1 The Head of Complaints and Appeals advised members that overall the report was positive and there had been notable improvements in the number of appeals made and the timeframes for complaint resolution compared to previous years. She noted that the OIA's statistics for UWE were in line with the median for similar sized HEIs across the sector and that, compared to last year, the volume of casework had reduced. She highlighted that very few appeals were found to be justified by the Ombudsman and that overall the results were encouraging.

AB 19.12.5.3.2 She also identified areas where improvements were still needed and reported that the team were working with Faculties on early resolution. In addition the team were also liaising with Business Intelligence to capture data which will provide access to a dashboard, enabling services and faculties to have in-year conversations around data.

AB 19.12.5.3.3 Members welcomed the report and endorsed the actions being taken.

AB 19.12.5.4 Student Conduct Annual Report

Paper AB 19/12/12 was received

AB 19.12.5.4.1 The Student Casework Manager advised members that the purpose of the report was to provide assurance that the University effectively manages the risks associated with student behaviour and student health through the following policies and procedures:

- Student Conduct (academic programmes)
- Professional Suitability (for programmes leading to professional registration)
- Fitness to Study

AB 19.12.5.4.2 She reported that the number of cases relating to seriously poor mental health, requiring supportive intervention from the University and parents/guardians, had increased significantly with the number of new cases considered under Fitness to Study increasing by nearly 50%. She confirmed that the team was encouraging reporting, so Academic Board could expect to see a further increase. She also acknowledged that it was difficult to know whether the increase reflected an increase in incidents or reporting. In contrast, the overall number of cases of student misconduct considered under these policies in 2018/19 had remained roughly the same as the previous year, following a period of year-on-year increases.

AB 19.12.5.4.3 Academic Board were also advised that additional work was being progressed around managing student health and challenging student conduct. In particular the University

was exploring how the "Fitness to Study" policy could be used to support student retention and the actions and work required to be a "healthy university".

AB 19.12.5.4.4

The Student Casework Manager confirmed that the statistics on page 185 referred to reports, not students. She also advised members that the revised policies and procedures, approved by the Board in October, would be introduced during the course of the year and would be accompanied by a communication plan for students and staff, a staff network to work with the Policy team on casework and training.

AB 19.12.5.4.5

Members welcomed the report and endorsed the actions being taken.

AB 19.12.5.5

Assurance Report to Academic Board for 2018-19: External Peer Review

Paper AB 19/12/13 was received

AB 19.12.5.5.1

The Director of Student and Academic Services highlighted that overall the report and the feedback received was very positive. It was also highlighted that Student and Academic Services were reviewing activity for the year that will identify further enhancements that can be considered and embedded. It was noted that collaborative provision would be part of the review.

AB 19.12.5.5.2

Academic Board endorsed the report.

AB 19.12.5.6

Report on Awards Conferred

Paper AB 19/12/14 was received

AB 19.12.5.6.1

The Head of Business Intelligence presented data on the distribution of undergraduate degree classifications awarded on behalf of Academic Board during 2018/19.

AB 19.12.5.6.2

He identified that the number of degrees classified as a 2:1 awarded had fallen across all Faculties compared to 2017/18, apart from in FET.

AB 19.12.5.6.3

It was noted that the position with midwifery and nursing was more complicated as student numbers had increased and the data showed the number of first degrees remained static and the number of lower second degrees decreased. It was reported that the department had worked hard to ensure every grade is merited.

AB 19.12.5.6.4

The Chair emphasised the importance of degree classifications reflecting student efforts and the University needing to ensure that the attainment gap is reduced. The Head of Business Intelligence recommended that Faculties drill down by subject to identify and explore issues and trends.

ACTION: Faculty Deans

AB 19.12.6

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

AB 19.12.6.1

Assurance Report for the development and approval of the taught portfolio – 2018/19

Paper AB 19/12/15 was received

AB 19.12.6.1.1

Academic Board noted the report.

AB 19.12.6.2

Honorary Degrees Committee Report

Paper AB 19/12/16 was received

AB 19.12.6.2.1 The report highlighted that a total of 17 new nominations were considered at the annual meeting of the Committee on 24 January 2019, and 3 were subsequently considered by the committee as late nominations. Out of these, 16 were conferred during 2019. Academic Board noted the report.

AB 19.12.7 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

AB 19.12.7.1 No items were raised.

DATES OF 2019/20 MEETINGS

Wednesday 26 February 2020

Wednesday 13 May 2020

Wednesday 1 July 2020

NB There will also be a joint meeting of Academic Board and Board of Governors in July 2020 (date TBC). The meeting is scheduled to last 2 hours and aims to support strategic planning.