

## ACADEMIC BOARD

**CONFIRMED**

Minutes of the Academic Board held on Wednesday 14 October, 2020. The meeting was held using Microsoft Teams.

**Present:** Paul Bennett, Martin Boddy, Tod Burton, Peter Clegg, Amanda Coffey, Olena Doran, Sonja Dragojlovic-Oliveira, Marc Griffiths, Helen King, Vanique Kruger, Mandy Lee, Elena Marco, Ray McDowell, Fidel Meraz, Jo Midgley, Christopher Moore, James Murphy, Augusta Chidinma Nnajofofor, Jane Ojiako, Paul Olomolaiye, Carinna Parraman, Jackie Rogers, Jane Roscoe, Nicholas Ryder, Jeanette Sakel, Jamie Stevens, Deborah Sturge, Sarah Todd, Steven West (Chair), Neil Willey.

**In attendance:** Jodie Anstee, Jason Briddon, Rachel Cowie, Chris Gledhill, Katie Jenkins, Heather Moyes (Secretary), Lee Norris (on behalf of Richard Strange), Amanda Oliver (Deputy Secretary),

**Apologies:** Sally Clark, Candy McCabe, Patricia Voaden

**Observers:** Richard Holmes

### **AB 20.10.1 WELCOME AND APOLOGIES**

AB 20.10.1 The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and announced the following new members:

- Jamie Stevens and Vanique Kruger (undergraduate student representatives)
- Deborah Sturge (FBL representative with responsibility for Learning and Teaching Management)
- Helen King (Deputy Director of Academic Practice and Head of Academic Development)
- Olena Doran (Associate Dean Research/ Vice-Chancellor Nominee, HAS)
- Jackie Rogers (Associate Dean L&T/ Vice-Chancellor Nominee, FET)
- Tod Burton (Acting PVC and Executive Dean, FET)

He also introduced Richard Holmes, a member of the Board of Governors attending the meeting as an observer.

AB 20.10.1.2 It was noted apologies had been received from Sally Clark, Candy McCabe, Richard Strange and Patricia Voaden

AB 20.10.1.3 No declarations of interest were received.

AB 20.10.1.4 **Academic Board Terms of Reference**  
*Paper AB 20/10/01 was received*

Members received and noted the Terms of Reference for Academic Board.

## **AB 20.10.2 MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING**

*Paper AB 20/10/02 and Paper AB 20/10/03 was received.*

AB 20.10.2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 1 July 2020 were **approved** as a true and accurate record of discussions. It was reported that Sonja Dragojlovic-Oliveira was present at the meeting, which should be reflected in the attendance list.

### **AB 20.10.2.2 Action Sheet and Matters Arising**

Academic Board noted the majority of actions arising from the previous meeting had been completed and the DVC and Provost noted that the outstanding actions would be taken forward during the academic year.

**ACTION: DVC and Provost**

### **AB 20.10.2.3 Chair's Actions**

AB 20.10.2.3.1 *Papers AB.20.10.04, AB.20.10.05, AB20.10.06 and AB 20.10.07 were received*

Members were advised that Chair's Action was taken to approve:

- Amendments to the 20/21 academic regulations which were published on 21 September;
- Changes to terms of reference for various committees reporting to Academic Board arising from assurance reports, and other changes required to support Strategy 2030 delivery;
- A variation to UWE academic regulations and procedures to enable compliance with PSRB requirements regarding engineering degree classification;
- Changes to student representation arrangements within the academic governance structure for 2020/2021.

## **AB 20.10.3\* STANDING AGENDA ITEMS**

### **AB 20.10.3.1 Update from the Vice-Chancellor**

*Paper AB 20/10/08 was received*

AB 20.10.3.1.1 Members received and noted a report from the Vice-Chancellor on institutional and sector developments since the last meeting. The Chair opened the item for discussion to provide members with an opportunity to discuss and consider the wider opening of campus.

AB 20.10.3.1.2 He reiterated that the Recovery Coordination Group (RCG) continued to oversee the management of the University's response to the pandemic, however, much of the activity had transitioned into existing Groups and Committees as part of business as usual. It was reported the RCG was overseeing emerging and outstanding issues to track and resolve them in a timely manner ensuring alignment with the latest guidance.

AB 20.10.3.1.3 He also reported that:

- More 'guidance' and updates were expected over the following week and that an increasing number of staff and students would test COVID positive. He emphasised that the situation would be monitored closely and the University would continue to work with PHE to test the University's protocols and actions;
- The University was closely following guidance from DfE and UUK and where the University was unable to comply with two metre distancing rules other measures would be taken to ensure sign off as COVID secure;

- Block Zero meant a delayed start to the academic year and this, combined with the phased return of students and staff, had allowed the University to learn from other institutions' experiences;
- The University would continue to work closely with the University Alliance mission group;
- The situation would remain under continuous review. He reiterated that it was not possible to mitigate all COVID related risks and further changes would be made as necessary to support business as usual, whilst ensuring the continued safety of staff and students.

AB 20.10.3.1.4 He also confirmed that Academic Board would be updated on all changes proposed and made.

AB 20.10.3.2 **\*Update from UWE Student Representatives**

*Paper AB 20/10/09 was received*

AB 20.10.3.2.1 The President of The Students' Union advised members that the start of the academic year had been very different, however, The Students' Union was pleased to have agreed three university-wide partnership projects to progress jointly with the University during the coming year and had hosted a range of physical and virtual events for students, including a virtual Freshers' Fair. She reported that the Freshers' Fair was well received and had a high student presence.

**AB 20.10.4 ITEMS FOR APPROVAL OR ENDORSEMENT**

**AB 20.10.4.1 Academic Board Business Planning Schedule**

*Paper AB 20/10/10 was received*

AB 20.10.4.1.1 The Secretary to Academic Board advised members that further work was being undertaken to ensure the indicative business plan fully aligned with assurance and risk management processes and enabled in-depth scrutiny and discussion of OfS requirements.

AB 20.10.4.1.2 Members approved the indicative business schedule subject to the above.

**ACTION: Secretary to Academic Board**

**AB 20.10.4.2 Academic Calendar, 2021/2022**

*Paper AB.20.10.11 was received*

AB 20.10.4.2.1 The Director of Student and Academic Services advised members that a recent consultation exercise had generated a significant amount of feedback which needed reflecting in the Calendar. She also noted that the recent decision by the UK Government to change the arrangements for GCSEs and A levels needed further consideration.

AB 20.10.4.2.2 It was agreed that members would send any comments to the Director of Student and Academic Services and Head of Student Administration and Advice, and the final version would be presented to the December Academic Board for approval.

**ACTION: Director Student and Academic Services**

**AB 20.10.4.3 Annual Academic Assurance Report to Board of Governors**

*Paper AB.20.10.12 was received*

AB 20.10.4.3.1 The Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Provost informed members that under condition E3 (ii) of the Regulatory Framework for Higher Education in England, the Board of Governors was

accountable to the Office for Students for ensuring the University's ongoing compliance with all of its conditions of registration. She advised that the report summarised how the Board of Governors receives assurance and the methodologies and processes in place to ensure continued compliance with:

- Conditions B1-6: Quality, reliable standards and positive outcomes for all students;
- Condition E2: Academic governance effectiveness.

AB 20.10.4.3.2 She highlighted that despite the period of disruption to normal operations caused by the Covid-19 pandemic these methodologies and processes had operated effectively during the 2019/20 academic year which was evidenced in the University achieving its highest ever position in the Guardian League Table.

AB 20.10.4.3.3 She also highlighted actions for 2020/21. These included:

- Reviewing the Academic Assurance Report in light of OfS regulatory changes and the revised CUC code;
- Implementing strategy readiness review approach across taught portfolio;
- Introducing the annual report on degree classifications aligned to Degree Outcomes Statement;
- Introducing Annual Academic Board and Committee effectiveness self-assessment (deferred from 2019/20);
- Introducing a scheme of delegation and policy governance framework;
- Periodic enhancement reviews, working with strategy 2030 readiness and finishing this cycle of business.

AB 20.10.4.3.4 The Chair also noted that only 21% of annual partnership monitoring reports had been submitted to date and further work was required to increase this number. It was also agreed that the appendices were unnecessary and could be removed from the report.

AB 20.10.4.3.5 It was noted that the report would go to the Strategic Planning and Performance Committee the following week and the data would be updated in advance of the meeting with a further update in advance of the November Board of Governors meeting.

AB 20.10.4.3.6 The Chair commended the report as providing a thorough overview and members agreed it provided assurance that the processes and methodologies were in place to ensure compliance with Conditions B1-6 and E2 of the Regulatory Framework.

AB 20.10.4.3.7 Members recommended the report for onward submission to the Board of Governors

**ACTION: Secretary to Academic Board**

#### **AB 20.10.4.4 Academic Board Annual Report**

*Paper AB.20.10.13 was received*

AB 20.10.4.4.1 The Secretary to Academic Board explained that the report should be read alongside the Annual Assurance Report to the Board of Governors.

AB 20.10.4.4.2 She noted it demonstrated that Academic Board had fulfilled its Terms of Reference during the 2019/20 academic year, adding value to the delivery of the University's academic strategy. She explained that the report also proposed actions to be undertaken during 2020/21 to enhance Academic Board's effectiveness.

AB 20.10.4.4.3 Academic Board confirmed it was satisfied that it discharged its responsibilities as outlined in its Terms of Reference during 2019/20. Academic Board approved the report, subject to minor changes to reflect discussion of the report and associated items in the meeting and to the Appendices to correct role titles.

**ACTION: Secretary to Academic Board**

**AB 20.10.4.5 Annual Research Governance Statement**

*Paper AB.20.10.14 was received*

AB 20.10.4.5.1 The PVC Research and Enterprise advised members that the Concordat to Support Research Integrity required the University to publish an annual statement on research integrity which had been approved by the Board of Governors. He reported that the paper presented was the University's Research Integrity Statement from 1 August 2019 to 31 July 2020 and included:

- A summary of actions and activities that have been undertaken to support and strengthen understanding and the application of research integrity issues;
- Statements of assurance that the processes the University has in place for dealing with allegations of misconduct are transparent, timely, robust and fair;
- Statements on formal investigations of research misconduct and lessons learnt. It was noted there had been two cases: one on failure to meet ethical, legal and professional obligations, and the other on plagiarism. Both were concluded at the screening stage and appropriate action taken;
- A statement on how the University creates and embeds a research environment in which all staff, researchers and students feel comfortable to report instances of misconduct. This was evidenced through:
  - The University establishing a dedicated Research Governance Team within Research, Business & Innovation;
  - The UWE Code of Good Research Conduct which represents the 'blueprint' for good research conduct at the University;
  - Research Integrity being supported by the following Sub-Committees of the University Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee:
    - UWE Research Ethics Sub-Committee (RESC), and reporting to it four Faculty Research Ethics Committees (FRECs);
    - UWE Human Tissue Sub-Committee (HTSC), and
    - UWE Animal Welfare and Ethics Sub-Committee (AWEC);
  - Mandatory training on research ethics

AB 20.10.4.5.2 It was confirmed that a more detailed statement would be provided for Faculties. Academic Board approved the Statement for presentation to the Board of Governors.

**ACTION: PVC Research and Enterprise**

**AB 20.10.4.6. Variant regulation (BSc (Hons) Professional Policing Practice/College of Policing)**

*Paper AB.20.10.15 was received*

AB 20.10.4.6.1 Academic Board were advised that the BSc (Hons) in Professional Policing Practice had been delivered by the Faculty of Health and Applied Sciences since May 2019 and it acts as the knowledge qualification in the Police Constable Degree Apprenticeship (PCDA). Due to the nationally agreed grading structure, members were informed that it is necessary to request a variant to UWE regulations in respect of the pass mark and grading of modules contributing towards both the BSc (Hons) Professional Policing Practice and the PCDA end-point assessment.

AB 20.10.4.6.2 Academic Board approved the variant request.

## **AB 20.10.4.7 Student Casework Annual Assurance Report**

*Paper AB.20.10.16 was received*

AB 20.10.4.7.1 The Head of Student and Academic Policy Enhancement explained that the report was designed to provide assurance that the University was managing effectively the risks associated with Student Casework and covered under the following policies and procedures:

- Student Conduct (and appeals);
- Professional Suitability (and appeals);
- Fitness to Study (and appeals);
- Formal Complaints;
- Academic Appeals;
- Points Based System (PBS) appeals;

as well as cases reviewed by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator and legal cases.

AB 20.10.4.7.2 He highlighted that this was the first year that a combined Student Casework assurance report has been compiled and it followed the creation of a single Student Casework team in 2019/20, amalgamating the former Complaints and Appeals and Student Policy Teams. He emphasised it was a transition year for the teams and a proactive approach in reporting on the outcomes of Casework to faculties and services had begun, with each Faculty and professional service having a designated link within the team.

AB 20.10.4.7.3 He also reported that:

- In comparison to the previous year, the volume of casework was lower but this was attributed to the campus move to online learning and teaching from 23 March, and possibly students' attention diverted to other priorities;
- There had been an increase in reported cases of sexual misconduct, discrimination and racism, and cases involving social media;
- A notable rise in the number of Foundation and Year One students being reported into the Student Conduct Policy;
- A reduction in formal cases related to Anti-Social Behaviour or Professional Suitability;
- In line with the trend from previous academic years, Fitness to Study cases increased in 2019/20 to 94, from 87 in 2018/19;
- As at 22 September, the University had received 56 Stage 1 Academic Appeals and 2 Stage 2 Academic Appeals. He explained that this stemmed from the significant changes with the timing of Award Boards and Resit Boards from the 2019/20 academic year and the timing of this report, however, it was not possible to compare this meaningfully with previous cycles (96 Stage 1 and 10 Stage 2 in 2018/19), as appeals were still being received and responded to by the Student Casework team, and outcomes of the Appeals process were still at an early stage.

AB 20.10.4.7.4 The Chair thanked the Head of Student and Academic Policy Enhancement for a comprehensive report but asked for additional work to ensure the consequences and links between cause and effect were more visible across the University to staff and students.

AB 20.10.4.7.5 Members also asked that the team were thanked for their support to programmes and commended them for the notable improvements in working relationships.

AB 20.10.4.7.6 The Chair also reported that all Vice-Chancellors had been written to by the Secretary of State for Education seeking support for the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) working definition of anti-Semitism. However, the University believed the statement was unlawful and it was noted that the issue would be discussed further with the Board of Governors.

**ACTION: Head of Student and Academic Policy Enhancement**

## **AB 20.10.5 ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**

### **AB 20.10.5.1 Summary of Quality Metrics 2019/20 NSS, PTES Results.**

*Paper AB 20/10/17 was received*

AB 20.10.5.1.1

The Head of Business Intelligence summarised the data in the report and highlighted that UWE had held its position on NSS whilst some of its key comparator institutions had dropped back which was a noteworthy achievement.

AB 20.10.5.1.2

He also reported that the vast majority of students had responded to the NSS before the University moved teaching and learning online whereas, in contrast, 20% of students completed PTES after the University moved teaching and learning online. Levels of overall satisfaction amongst students completing the PTES questionnaire were 4.5% lower than those completing NSS.

AB 20.10.5.1.3

The Chair asked that strong congratulations were given to colleagues for their continued efforts in this challenging environment.

### **AB 20.10.5.2 REF Progress Report**

*Paper AB 20/10/18 was received*

AB 20.10.5.2.1

The PVC Research and Enterprise advised members that the report detailed the University's preparation for the 2021 Research Excellence Framework (REF2021) and includes the overall shape of the submission, and some indication of how well the University might perform.

AB 20.10.5.2.2

He emphasised that performance in the REF was a key criteria for the success of Research with Impact, embedded as a core purpose in *UWE Strategy 2030* and that poor performance in the REF represents a significant risk to the University's reputation, league table rankings and future research income.

AB 20.10.5.2.3

He reported that predicting the outcomes with any degree of certainty was difficult, as these were also dependant on the performance of UWE's 'competitors' on which there was little information. However, he stated that some tentative conclusions on progress relative to REF2014 could be drawn, namely:

- The overall quality of outputs was, on the face of it, higher. Based on the University's assessment process, 97% of outputs to be submitted in 2021 were estimated to be at least 3\*, compared to 54% rated at least 3\* in REF 2014 (actual results). The mean 'star rating' for outputs was up from 2.55 in 2014 (actual) to 3.21 for 2021 (estimated) an increase of 25%. Also, (Table 3a). A third measure, 'research power' (star rating multiplied by number of staff submitted) was also significantly higher for 2021 compared with 2014;
- The University had the required number of impact case studies (42). These varied in terms of quality and preparedness, however, further work would be undertaken to address this;
- The University was confident in the quality of the research environment in terms of strategy, processes and infrastructure;

- Two metrics also contribute to environment: research income which had continued to increase year on year and at a higher rate than over the previous REF period and average PGR completions per year (figure 2) which were, however, down on the previous REF period – 67 pa compared to 74 pa for REF 2014. This was attributed to a decision to focus on the quality and timely completion of PGR, together with concerns over the level of subsidy required. He reassured members that these issues had been addressed successfully and overall PGR numbers had increased – reflected in a strongly rising trajectory in completions over the last three years.

AB 20.10.5.2.4 He acknowledged that more could be done to market taught doctorates and that issues relating to equality, diversity and inclusivity had been identified (e.g. the academic administrative burden appears to fall more on women than men, which may limit female members of staff's opportunities to engage in research) with further detail to be reported at a future date.

AB 20.10.5.2.5 The Chair thanked the PVC Research and Enterprise for the report and stated that the Board looked forward to receiving future updates.

**ACTION: PVC Research and Enterprise**

**AB 20.10.6 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

AB 20.10.6.1 No items of any other business were received.

**Dates of 2020/21 Meetings**

**Wednesday 9 December 2020**

**Wednesday 3 March 2021**

**Wednesday 12 May 2021**

**Wednesday 7 July 2021**