



ACADEMIC BOARD

Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 7 December 2022

- Present:** Steven West (Chair), Jodie Anstee, Yvonne Beach, Georgie Benford, Paul Bennett, Roshin Chummun, Wendy Colvin, Rachel Cowie, Lily Diyemowei, Kiana Edkandani, Chris Gledhill, John Griffiths, Marc Griffiths, Vanique Kruger, Mandy Lee, James Macdonald, Jo Midgley, Lyn Newton, Rania Regaieg, Jackie Rogers, Jim Smith, Sadie Trent, Sarah Ward, Emma Weitkamp, Neil Willey
- In attendance:** Nick Button (Officer), Marcus Pugh (observer), Suzanne Carrie & Simon Phillips (item 1), Ian Stratton (item 5.1)
- Apologies:** Martin Boddy, Jason Briddon, Amanda Coffey, Hilary Drew, Olena Doran, Katie Jenkins, Helen King, Heather Moyes (Secretary), Richard Strange, Viljo Wilding
- Observers:** Laura Claydon (Board of Governors)

AB.22.12.1 **WORKSHOP**

AB.22.12.1.1 **Thematic Deep Dive: Student mental health**

Academic Board members worked in three groups to create draft assurance statements and identify potential sources of data that would help ensure that the Board of Governors and others were assured of the quality and effectiveness of the University's student mental health support. The groups then identified three ways to measure the assurance statements and reviewed other groups statements.

The outputs from this activity would be fed into the wider development of assurance statements and metrics for the Health and Wellbeing Strategy and would be combined with feedback from other groups. Academic Board would have the opportunity to comment on this in Summer 2023.

AB.22.12.2 **WELCOME AND APOLOGIES**

AB.22.12.2.1 **Welcome to members**

The Chair welcomed the newly elected members of Academic Board: Georgie Benford representing Learning & Teaching Management in CHSS and James Macdonald representing Learning & Teaching staff in CHSS. He also welcomed Laura Claydon as the Board of Governors observer.

AB.22.12.2.2 **Apologies for absence**

The Chair noted all apologies.

AB.22.12.2.3 **Declaration of interests**

No declarations of interest were notified.

AB.22.12.3 MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

AB.22.12.3.1 Previous Minutes

Paper AB.22.12.01 was received

Members confirmed the minutes were an accurate record of the meeting of Wednesday 7 October 2022.

AB.22.12.3.2 Action Sheet and Matters Arising

Paper AB.22.12.02 was received

The Chair noted all outstanding actions on the Action Sheet and their progress to date. Arising from an action relating to mandatory training, it was noted that wider consideration was being given to this issue and whether the current level of training was appropriate.

AB.22.12.3.3 Chair's Actions

Papers AB.22.12.03/04 were received.

The Chair noted the Chair's Actions that had been approved since the last meeting of Academic Board, relating to:

- Contextual Admissions Policy approval
- Independent Assessor and External Assessor Roles.

AB.22.12.4 STANDING AGENDA ITEMS

AB.22.12.4.1 Update from the Vice-Chancellor

Paper AB.22.12.05 was received.

AB.22.12.4.1.1 The Vice-Chancellor delivered an update to Academic Board, highlighting:

- i. There had been a successful set of graduation ceremonies conducted in November.
- ii. The status of the University's Initial Teacher Training provision was still unresolved, with a decision pending from the Department for Education. If the situation was not resolved shortly then UUK would involve itself given the impact the uncertainty was having on a number of institutions. If the situation required, the most likely grounds for judicial review would come from the appeals process itself.
- iii. Proposed changes to NSS questions had raised concern in the devolved nations.

AB.22.12.4.2 Update from the Students' Union

Paper AB.22.12.06 was received.

AB.22.12.4.2.1 The Students' Union President updated Academic Board on the Union's activities. Attention was drawn to:

- i. The evaluation work from Speak Week was ongoing but there were some broad themes emerging on issues such as facilities where greater study space and 24-hour access to the library had

been common responses, the preference for hybrid models of learning and teaching delivery, and concerns about current issues with transport to campus. The data had been collected by both conversations with students and digital survey links. Further data on this would be circulated shortly and the initial report had been shared with Student & Academic Services.

- ii. The Students' Union had welcomed the discussions about the Fossil-Fuel Free careers commitment. The University was working to ensure that all students received impartial support and career advice that included moral and ethical considerations as well as their skills suitability. The University would carefully review its arrangements on this at regular intervals to ensure that support was appropriate, and that freedom of speech issues were being taken proper account of.

AB.22.12.4.3

Strategy 2030

Paper AB.22.12.07 was received.

AB.22.12.4.3.1

Academic Board received an update on the progress of the delivery of the Strategy 2030 themes. Deeper dives on individual elements to gather detailed feedback would be considered at a later date. Attention was drawn to:

- i. The three layers of delivery: vision and strategy, business layer, and operating layer each had workstreams that would support delivery of the Strategy. The Target Operating Model, for example, sat within the operating layer and had several workstreams arising from it as a result of student and staff feedback. Each workstream had a vision statement and common design features exemplifying a whole system approach to create value when designing services.
- ii. The transition to Colleges and Schools was progressing well, with the next stage about ensuring consistency of design principles within the Schools while taking account of the nuanced differences between them and the need for a minimum viable bureaucracy.
- iii. A significant challenge remained in the University's White-Black awarding gaps, with key strands of work on leadership, targeting, culture, and belonging to be undertaken with an overall institutional focus on the issue.
- iv. The Place Strategy involved workstreams on efficient and effective use of space, campus life, and learning spaces. The Student Accommodation Strategy was an important strand of this.

AB.22.12.4.3.2

On the issue of awarding gaps, Academic Board noted that there was evidence that certain types of assessment were more likely to create awarding gaps and College and School strategies to tackle it should be addressing those issues. While there was significant variability in awarding gaps between disciplines and courses, it was important that this did not simply become a data driven exercise. Many other institutions struggled with the same issues of attendance and engagement, but UWE Bristol remained an outlier in terms of its large awarding gaps.

AB.22.12.5 ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

AB.22.12.5.1 Speak Up and OfS (Statement of Expectations) Compliance Update

Paper AB.22.12.08 was received.

AB.22.12.5.1.1 Academic Board received an update on the Speak Up project and the University's compliance with the OfS seven expectations on how institutions deal with sexual harassment and misconduct on campus. The report had previously been considered by LTSEC and noted that the University was compliant with the baseline expectations and was working towards enhancement activities. There was a process of continuous improvement in this area, and it was embedded within a wider piece of work on managing the health and wellbeing of the student population, with areas of focus including creating response processes across the institution, identifying areas that had additional training needs, making sure that staff understood how to respond to disclosure, and managing expectations on outcomes. There was also the ongoing work of looking at how diverse student cohorts reflected differing attitudes on sex and consent.

AB.22.12.5.1.2 During discussion, Academic Board raised the following points:

- i. The 2020 review of activity through Speak Up had raised a series of recommendations with work ongoing to action those, including bringing in more relevant terminology and improved practice.
- ii. There was a piece of work to be done on how the University worked with the Students' Union and shared information, and to ensure that student leaders had sufficient training to have the confidence to discuss these issues, including sharing lived experiences.
- iii. The distinction between criminal and internal investigations was important and had to be considered when sharing information.
- iv. There were challenges with ensuring that academic staff who needed to know about individual cases were kept informed while being mindful of GDPR and ICO considerations.
- v. The scale and nature of the issues that students were encountering were reported within the Serious Concerns system.
- vi. It was important to ensure simplicity in how students could report while not cutting off routes for reporting either.

AB.22.12.5.1.3 Academic Board noted and welcomed the progress on these issues.

AB.22.12.5.2 Academic Committee Elections

Paper AB.22.12.09 was received.

AB.22.12.5.2.1 Academic Board noted that a set of elections for the University's academic committees had been held and that those outstanding vacancies would be filled by co-opting new members in the short-term with a fresh set of elections held in Summer 2023.

AB.22.12.5.3 Teaching Excellent Framework (TEF) Submission

Verbal

AB.22.12.5.3.1 Academic Board received an update on the progress of drafting the University's Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) Submission and the Student Submission. The deadline for both was 24 January. The most significant challenge that had arisen was providing quantifiable evidence to support the positive interventions that the University was making in learning and teaching. The data was showing poor performance in continuation in both part-time provision, which could be explained by CPD and data lag, and full-time provision, which had been more unexpected.

AB.22.12.5.3.2 Academic Board noted the progress, and that a formal draft would be shared for comments with some Academic Board members for critical review before the final version was considered with the Vice-Chancellor's Executive and signed off by the Vice-Chancellor ahead of the 24 January deadline. The draft Student Submission would be shared with the TEF Working Group shortly.

Action: Director of Student & Academic Services / Students' Union President

AB.22.12.6 ITEMS FOR APPROVAL/ENDORSEMENT

AB.22.12.6.1 Annual Quality Report 2021/22

Paper AB.22.12.10 was received.

AB.22.12.6.1.1 Academic Board considered the proposed Annual Quality Report, which had previously been endorsed by LTSEC. It was noted that this was a new approach to delivering assurance on the University's quality and standards rather than a series of smaller reports spaced throughout the year. Due to its enhanced responsibilities around quality, the Report would also go to the Board of Governors for endorsement. Attention was drawn to the set of recommendations for the next academic year with accompanying confidence rating that risks were being mitigated.

AB.22.12.6.1.2 During discussion, Academic Board raised the following points:

- i. In the context of the ongoing Ofsted inspection, the University's greater exposure to risk from its apprenticeship provision remained a key issue. SAPG were considering the portfolio as a whole including apprenticeships and there were concerns being flagged by the Subject Readiness Review that needed to be addressed. Often decisions about provision exit were driven by regulations, inspections, market exit, or employer wishes rather than strategic direction of the institution.
- ii. The three actions recommended by the Report would help mitigate the Red risk around apprenticeships but significant residual risk remained, in addition to any issues that could arise as a result of the Ofsted inspection.

AB.22.12.6.1.3 Academic Board approved the Annual Quality Report for consideration by the People, Culture, Quality & Standards Committee (PCQSC) and subsequently the Board of Governors.

Action: Secretary/Officer

AB.22.12.6.2 Degree Outcomes Statement 2022: Interim Update

Paper AB.22.12.11 was received.

AB.22.12.6.2.1 Academic Board considered the Degree Outcomes Statement 2022: Interim Update that detailed the University's grade profiles and its work on returning its Good Honours rate to its pre-pandemic levels. The University had achieved that target and would publish this statement in line with UUK best practice before the end of the calendar a year. A full Degree Outcomes Statement would come back to Academic Board later in the academic year.

AB.22.12.6.2.2 Academic Board approved the report for consideration by PCQSC and the Board of Governors. Due to the publishing deadline, approval would be sought via Chair's Action from both the Chair of PCQSC and the Chair of the Board of Governors.

Action: Secretary/Officer

AB.22.12.6.3 Research Integrity Report

Paper AB.22.12.12 was received.

AB.22.12.6.3.1 Academic Board considered and approved the Research Integrity Report for the 2021/22 academic year for consideration by PCQSC.

Action: Secretary/Officer

AB.22.12.7 SUMMARY REPORTS FROM SUB-COMMITTEES

Papers AB.22.12.13/14/15 were received.

AB.22.12.7.1 Members noted summary reports from sub-committees as follows:

- LTSEC (17 November 2022)
- RKEC (16 November 2022)
- SAPG (1 November 2022)

AB.22.12.8 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

AB.22.12.8.1 Student transport

Academic Board considered the impact of cancelled bus services on students. Students had reported issues of missing lectures, disruptions as other students arrived late, and tickets timing out, with an impact on students travelling between campuses and to placements. The University was working with the bus companies and the West of England Combined Authority to minimise the disruption to students while recognising the challenging financial situation that operators were facing. In the context of a cost-of-living crisis there was also the need for further consideration of the University's hybrid teaching provision and how students with travel challenges could benefit from an enhanced offer in this space.

AB.22.12.9 DATES OF 2022/23 MEETINGS

- AB.22.12.9.1
- Wednesday 1 March 2023
 - Wednesday 17 May 2023
 - Wednesday 5 July 2023
 - Tuesday 11 July 2023 (with Board of Governors)

