



Board of Governors

ACADEMIC BOARD

Minutes of the meeting held on 26 February 2025 in Room 4Q04 on Frenchay Campus.

Present: Steve West (Chair), Kwaku Baah, Sasirindu Bandara, Gracie Bell, Georgie Benford, Jacqueline Butler, Peter Clegg, Amanda Coffey, Wendy Colvin, Gareth Edwards, Georgina Gough, Bernhard Gross, John Hancock, Khadiza Hossain, James Lee, Phil Legg, Elena Marco, Jo Michell, Cathy Minett-Smith, Kolawole Samuel Olure, Marcus Pugh, Jackie Rogers, Vlasios Sarantinos, Andrew Simpson, Nicola Temple, Sarah Voss, Jenni Wilkinson

Apologies: Yvonne Beach, Gracie Bell, Jason Briddon, Chris Gledhill, Katie Jenkins, James MacDonald, Jo Midgley, Dan Wood

In attendance: Jodie Anstee, David Barrett (item 5.1), Rachel Cowie, Heather Moyes (Secretary), Rose Ward (item 6.2), David Young (Officer)

Observers: Carolyn Donoghue from the Board of Governors

AB.25.02.1 WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

AB.25.02.1.1 The Chair welcomed members, particularly the lay member of the Board of Governors attending in an observational capacity, and the Student Lead School Rep from SBLS, attending his first Board.

AB.25.02.1.2 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.25.02.2 WORKSHOP/DEEP DIVE

AB.25.02.2.1**Lessons from Halpin: Governance Effectiveness and Enhancement**

Paper AB.25.02.01 was received.

AB.25.02.2.1.1

The Chief of Staff and Clerk of the Board of Governors introduced a presentation on taking forward the recommendations of the Halpin review of governance effectiveness. Members were reminded that an external review of effectiveness across corporate and academic governance is conducted every four years. The Halpin management consultancy was commissioned to undertake the most recent review, and their report was considered by the Board of Governors on 20 November 2024. Overall, UWE's governance was rated as "improving to good."

AB.25.02.2.1.2

Members were split into small groups to give initial reaction to the report's 30-plus recommendations and specifically the ways in which these recommendations could have a positive impact upon the practice, transparency and efficacy of Academic Board. Members were asked to workshop in the following impact areas: training and development, business flows, and stakeholder communication and engagement.

AB.25.02.2.1.3

Members raised the following observations:

- 1) The review has raised genuine challenges on assurance with clarity needed on committee responsibility. Is it limited to these "3 hours"? What groups can facilitate the business outside of meeting times?
- 2) What are the core decisions that Academic Board takes and how are they conveyed to members? What does the Board add in terms of amendments and scrutiny?
- 3) Does the Board have the proper protocols in place for making decisions on items (e.g. voting, clarity on consensus)?
- 4) Part of the training and development requirements should include the expectation on reps and ensuring that members generally receive relevant inputs to increase their awareness.
- 5) A "mock Board" could be part of the training.
- 6) Info flows could be more transparent with more enhanced use of executive summaries (work upon which has been started, the Board heard).
- 7) Although the "intimidating" size and scope of Board Pack documentation was commented upon, members

acknowledged that papers are becoming more focused and streamlined.

- 8) The physical dynamics of the meeting itself may need to be looked at (e.g. table configurations, job titles on name cards).

AB.25.02.2.1.4 The Chair commended members on their energy and engagement. They were encouraged to keep giving feedback on an ongoing basis as well as providing additional comments so a summary of Academic Board outcomes can be added to communication to be sent to all UWE staff [**Action:** Chief of Staff and Clerk of the Board of Governors].

AB.25.02.3 MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

AB.25.02.3.1 Previous minutes

Paper AB.25.02.02 was received.

AB.25.02.3.1.1 Members approved the minutes of the meeting held on 11 December 2024 pending the following minor corrections to the “members present” section:

1. Margaret Simmons-Bird to be noted as the observer from Board of Governors instead of Domini Harewood.
2. Jo Michell to be added as present.

[**Action:** Committee Officer]

AB.25.02.3.2 Action sheet and matters arising

Paper AB.25.02.03 was received.

AB.25.02.3.2.1 Members noted that the majority of actions on the action sheet were now closed or not yet due. Updates were noted on the following specific actions:

AB.25.02.3.2.2 *Wednesday Afternoon Teaching Project (AB.24.12.4.2.5)*
UPDATE: Following a detailed review, the Deputy Registrar confirmed that a portion of the previously identified instances of activity taking place on Wednesday afternoons were PGT or non-teaching related activity, hence legitimate exceptions to the general principle that teaching should end by 13:00 on those days. No patterns were discernible in the events held on Wednesday afternoons. A wider need exists to help students navigate their timetables, with programme and module leaders working with the SU to communicate back to students. Peer-to-peer support was also considered to be helpful. Action closed.

AB.25.02.3.2.3 *Reading weeks (AB.24.12.4.2.5)*
UPDATE: The Deputy Registrar reiterated that the academic calendar is developed to be as flexible as possible. There is therefore no intention of a general reading week being implemented. It was noted that Schools have the space and adaptability to design the flow of modules within individual programmes to suit the needs of students. As above, it was noted that ensuring that students are sufficiently engaged and informed about their timetables is important. Action closed.

AB.25.02.3.3 Chair's actions
Paper AB.25.02.04 was received.

AB.25.02.3.3.1 Members noted the following items approved under Chair's action since the last meeting on 11 December 2024:

- 1) Stephen Hoskins – Emeritus Professor application.
- 2) Spring Vacation 2025/26. Dates moved to align with local authority school vacations now published.
- 3) College Postgraduate Research Committee Terms of Reference.

AB.25.02.4 STANDING AGENDA ITEMS

AB.25.02.4.1 Vice-Chancellor's report
Paper AB.25.02.05 was received.

AB.25.02.4.1.1 Members noted for information the Chair's update on strategic matters relevant to Academic Board.

AB.25.02.4.1.2 The Board noted the work being done with transnational education partners on raising awareness and implementing the OfS (Office for Students) E6 conditions on harassment and sexual misconduct in a way that is sensitive to local circumstances. Clarity and adherence to legal obligations were emphasised as crucial in robustly managing this situation.

AB.25.02.4.2 The Students' Union report
Paper AB.25.02.06 was received.

- AB.25.02.4.2.1 The SU President and VP Education introduced their report.
- AB.25.02.4.2.2 An update on progress on the Reasonable Adjustment to Deadline Task and Finish Group was briefly discussed.
- AB.25.02.4.2.3 In the context of NSS reporting, a discussion took place on working with module leaders to raise awareness of the Students' Union in courses where recognition appears to be low.
- AB.25.02.4.2.4 Members received updates on student representation, with 1,114 reps now reported as signed up, and a 30% increase in trained reps from this point last year. Collaboration with staff was held to be positive. It was noted that the Reimagining Student Representation Project would support the SU on the issue of inactive reps. It was reported that 80 students and six LDRs attended a successful recent Student Conference.
- AB.25.02.4.2.5 Further matters discussed were the nominations for the Student Experience Awards and the help that the University could give the SU officers to build on their legacies over time.

AB.25.02.4.3

Thematic sub-committee business reports

Papers AB.25.02.07-10 were received.

- AB.25.02.4.3.1 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.25.02.4.3.2 The Chair of the Learning Teaching and Student Experience Committee (LTSEC) reported that, on the meeting of 5 February 2025, there was a deep dive on SU priorities, a workshop on embedding the Anti-Racism Strategy within the workings of the Committee, a presentation on the latest data of non-continuation and completion KPIs, as well as items on risk assurance, My Engagement, the Reimagining Student Representation Project, and an assurance update on teaching out at BOVTS.
- AB.25.02.4.3.3 The Chair of the Research and Knowledge Exchange (RKEC) reported that, at the meeting of 30 January 2025, there was a deep dive on postgraduate research, an update on actions associated with the Research Concordat, a presentation on effective assurance on Health and Safety, an insight piece on the

external research income corporate KPI, a spotlight on the SAFE research centre, a proposal to review and test research risk appetite, and an endorsement of the new College Postgraduate Research Committee Terms of Reference.

AB.25.02.4.3.4 The Chair of the Strategic Academic Portfolio Group (SAPG) reported that, on the meeting of 6 February 2025, there were items on student numbers and market attractiveness, College portfolio development and growth opportunities, the international growth strategy (e.g. the Africa Strategy), Foundation Year mapping, and new partnership and programme proposals. Further discussion took place in Academic Board on SAPG examining the opportunities and risk points of UCAS Clearing exposure. It was confirmed that the sub-committee annually addresses this, although it would be beneficial to be more agile and faster in analysing Clearing risk.

AB.25.02.4.3.5 The Chair of the University Ethics and Integrity Committee (UEIC) reported that, on the meeting of 11 February 2025, there was a presentation on the ECCTA legislation, an update on audit matters, a discussion on Health & Safety with the section head, progress on finalising a research misconduct procedure, a report on the welfare compliance on the School of Arts, and assurance on the effective functioning of the CRECs and the UEIC sub-committees. Further discussion took place in Academic Board on the need for additional student guidance on the appropriate use of Artificial Intelligence. The Chair commented that there is a gap that needs filling on clarifying expectations in respect of generative/non-generative AI. Further discussion on AI to be scheduled for the May Academic Board [**Action:** Secretary/ Officer].

AB.25.02.4.3.6 Members of Academic Board confirmed that they were assured with regards to the delegated academic activities of the thematic sub-committees.

AB.25.02.5 STRATEGY 2030

AB.25.02.5.1 UWE and the Region: How we partner strategically with FE across our region
Paper AB.25.02.11 was received.

AB.25.02.5.1.1 The Director of Regional Engagement introduced a report on how UWE's growth strategy can be enhanced through growing and deepening our further education (FE) regional partnerships.

AB.25.02.5.1.2 It was noted UWE has a largely responsive and transactional relationship with its regional partners. However, the University cannot afford to stand still. There are future mutual benefits of fostering stronger partnerships, of UWE operating in alignment with its Strategy 2030 to become a long-term exemplar in this area. The Government is expecting greater join-up between tertiary and HE sectors, and UWE can provide a coherent response, adding value to our accredited teaching and other activity with partners and employers across our region, maximising community impact and securing UWE's reputation as the go-to practice-led HEI for skills in the region. Examples of this extra value include the UWE Care Academy, the UWE Rise initiative, Gloucester College's Hub 8, Leonardo, and technical and knowledge exchange with new partners such as Yeovil.

AB.25.02.5.1.3 In discussion, the following comments were made:

- 1) The Vice-Chancellor noted that, in terms of HE and regional strategy, competition has increasingly become collaboration, with an alignment between the four universities in Bath/Bristol already in process.
- 2) An embedding of the sustainability agenda is increasingly relevant in collaborative work, and UWE needs to build on its already good work in this space.
- 3) Businesses require clarity, and UWE should provide a simple, positive and united "front door" for local employers.
- 4) How "the region" is defined should also be considered, as many school pupils in Somerset see UWE as their "local" university.

AB.25.02.5.1.4 In summary, Academic Board commented positively on the current direction and approach to deepening our FE partnerships. The importance of the industrial strategy being developed for the region was emphasised. UWE Bristol has a lot to offer the region and as part of a 'coalition of the willing' it can secure future financial benefits. It was also important to perceive our students as regional lifelong learners.

AB.25.02.6	ITEMS FOR APPROVAL OR ENDORSEMENT
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AB.25.02.6.1	Honorary Degrees Committee – revised Terms of Reference
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Paper AB.25.02.12 was received.

- AB.25.02.6.1.1 The Chair, in his capacity as Chair of the Honorary Degrees Committee, introduced proposed revisions to the Committee's Terms of Reference agreed at its meeting on 15 January 2025.
- AB.25.02.6.1.2 The changes proposed that the nominations by Academic Board be broadened to everyone within the University Professoriate and that a term of office of three years be applied.
- AB.25.02.6.1.3 Academic Board approved these amendments to the HDC Terms of Reference.

AB.25.02.6.2 Policy and process for students under the age of 18 years

Paper AB.25.02.13 was received.

- AB.25.02.6.2.1 The Safeguarding Manager invited members to consider and approve changes made to ensure that UWE's under 18's admission policy is clear and informed by correct legalisation and process. Also, to ensure that key areas of the University are able to make risk assessments and plans for any incoming under 18s.
- AB.25.02.6.2.2 The main change involved further clarity on those under 18 students going onto appropriate professional placements.
- AB.25.02.6.2.3 It was noted in discussion that UWEBIC has a separate policy which will need to be taken to the next Safeguarding review.
- AB.25.02.6.2.4 Academic Board was content with the changes made to this policy subject to the clarification of two points:
- 1) A further amendment to the wording in the field trip section.
 - 2) Amendment in the process section of the policy to take account of early cohort activities.
- AB.25.02.6.2.5 The policy and process to be considered through Chair's action after the above changes are implemented [**Action:** Safeguarding Manager/ Secretary/ Officer].

AB.25.02.6.3 Criminal Conviction Policy 2025

Paper AB.25.02.14 was received.

- AB.25.02.6.3.1 The Chair introduced a paper that detailed recent changes made to the Criminal Conviction Policy. It was noted that the amendments

covered additional information regarding relevant convictions for disclosure, a new section added on undisclosed convictions, and a Data Privacy statement incorporated into the main Admissions statement.

AB.25.02.6.3.2 Academic Board resolved to request advice from the General Counsel on whether the insertion of “including but not limited to” is sufficient to avoid UWE adopting an overly narrow list of criminal offences within the parameters of this policy. Also requested was a clarification of arrangements for dealing with fraudulent applications, to ensure that the Head of Recruitment and Admissions is not interpreted as being the sole arbiter.

AB.25.02.6.3.3 The policy to be considered through Chair’s action after the above changes are implemented [**Action:** Head of Recruitment and Admissions/ Secretary/ Officer].

AB.25.02.6.4 Academic Committee Calendar, 2025-26
Paper AB.25.02.15 was received.

AB.25.02.6.4.1 The Chair introduced a draft of the 2025-26 academic committee calendar for consideration and approval.

AB.25.02.6.4.2 Concerns were expressed from the SU President that a July Academic Board causes potential problems as regards the transition between sabbatical teams. The Chair confirmed that the calendar was driven by UWE business needs. Nevertheless, opportunities exist to help the SU develop a more effective transition as regards their Academic Board responsibilities. It was noted that the issue will be taken off-line for a solution to be worked out, with referral to the Reimagining Student Representation Project.

AB.25.02.6.4.3 The calendar was approved by Academic Board.

AB.25.02.7 ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

AB.25.02.7.1 Academic Performance and Risk report (Academic Assurance)
Paper AB.25.02.16 was received.

AB.25.02.7.1.1 The DVC-Provost introduced an assurance report drawing together performance against the University’s academic-related KPI targets

and the seven identified risks (four strategic, three tactical) overseen by the Academic Board's thematic sub-committees. The present report captures the outcomes of the recent risk deep dives by the risk owners/leads.

AB.25.02.7.1.2 Members were informed that the status of academic risks has generally improved, including in areas such as non-continuation. However, only modest progress has been made on the black-white awarding gap, as well as negative results on research income performance and Clearing exposure.

AB.25.02.7.1.3 Members of Academic Board were assured on the robust management of corporate KPIs and academic risks, with further action to progress performance to be taken forward by the relevant thematic sub-committees.

AB.25.02.8 ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

AB.25.02.8.1 Aegrotat and Posthumous Awards Report, 2023/24
Paper AB.25.02.17 was received.

AB.25.02.8.1.1 Members noted the posthumous awards made during the preceding academic year.

AB.25.02.8.2 Honorary Degrees Committee - update on 2024 activity
Paper AB.25.02.18 was received.

AB.25.02.8.2.1 Members noted a summary of activity of the HDC in 2024.

AB.25.02.9 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

None to report.

AB.25.02.10 DATE(S) OF NEXT MEETING(S)

AB.25.02.10.1 Next meeting dates for academic year 2024/25:

- 7 May 2025
- 2 July 2025
- 8 July 2025 (joint session with the Board of Governors)