



Board of Governors

ACADEMIC BOARD

Minutes of the meeting held on 7 May 2025 in Room 4Q04 on Frenchay Campus.

Present: Steve West (Chair), Sasirindu Bandara, Yvonne Beach, Georgie Benford, Peter Clegg, Amanda Coffey, Wendy Colvin, Georgina Gough, Bernhard Gross, John Hancock, Khadiza Hossain, Katie Jenkins, James Lee, James MacDonald, Elena Marco, Jo Michell, Jo Midgley, Cathy Minett-Smith, Kolawole Samuel Olure, Marcus Pugh, Jackie Rogers, Vlasios Sarantinos, Andrew Simpson, Nicola Temple, Sarah Voss, Jenni Wilkinson, Yarden Woolf

Apologies: Kwaku Baah, Jason Briddon, Jacqueline Butler, Gareth Edwards, Gracie Bell, Phil Legg, Muhammad Shehzad, Dan Wood

In attendance: Jodie Anstee, Rachel Cowie, Chris Gledhill, Heather Moyes (Secretary), Nicky Pavitt (item 6.2), David Young (Officer)

Observers: Dave Tansley from the Board of Governors

AB.25.05.1 WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

AB.25.05.1.1 The Chair welcomed members, particularly the lay member of the Board of Governors attending in an observational capacity. The new PGR rep was also welcomed to her first Academic Board.

AB.25.05.1.2 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.25.05.2 WORKSHOP/DEEP DIVE

AB.25.05.2.1 Horizon Scanning 2050
Presentation was received.

AB.25.05.2.1.1	The Chief of Staff and Clerk of the Board of Governors introduced a presentation to consider the University's future environment, potential impacts and opportunities.
AB.25.05.2.1.2	Future trends were highlighted, such as the challenge to be more sustainable, increasing focus in a globalised world, local community embedding, digital education, democratisation of knowledge, AI integration, LLE and decentralised credentials, the mind/machine interface, industrial integration, and new frontiers of knowledge.
AB.25.05.2.1.3	Demands for future skills were also highlighted, including likely key jobs in AI, big data, cybersecurity and data protection, renewable energy, public health, technology and engineering, creative and digital arts, space exploration, entrepreneurship, robot maintenance, and AI and automation consultancy.
AB.25.05.2.1.4	The following challenge questions were posed: In terms of these new skills, how can UWE position itself in terms of developing core skills such as data literacy, emotional intelligence, and the ethical implications and governance of AI? What will be UWE's role in this future environment (and the purpose of universities more generally)? What remains true and constant in what our institution does? But crucially what decisions should Academic Board take now to have an impact in 2040/50?
AB.25.05.2.1.5	Although the immediate focus must return to the 2030 Strategy, imaginative and forward-thinking decisions on Strategy 2050 will need to be revisited in further Academic Boards. Future business plans to reflect this longer-term priority [Action: Secretary].

AB.25.05.3 MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

AB.25.05.3.1 Previous minutes

Paper AB.25.05.01 was received.

AB.25.05.3.1.1	Members approved the minutes of the meeting held on 26 February 2025 pending the following minor amendments: Head of Governance to be listed within the apologies, and the spelling of the name of the Board of Governors observer to be corrected [Action: Committee Officer].
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AB.25.05.3.2 Action sheet and matters arising

Paper AB.25.05.02 was received.

- AB.25.05.3.2.1 Members noted that the majority of actions on the action sheet were now closed. Updates were noted on the following specific actions:
- AB.25.05.3.2.2 *AB.25.02.2.1.4 Lessons from Halpin: Members 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.*
UPDATE: The paper to be received under agenda item 7.3 below includes information on the communication to be imminently released.
- AB.25.05.3.2.3 *AB.25.02.4.3.5 The need for additional student guidance on the appropriate use of Artificial Intelligence.*
UPDATE: The Chair of University Ethics and Integrity Committee (UEIC) updated members on recent discussions under Matters Arising 3.2.2 below.
- AB.25.05.3.2.4 *AB.24.12.6.1.5 Annual Quality Report: To strengthen the Student Voice, a student-friendly version of the Quality report to be prepared and sent to the Students' Union.*
UPDATE: Academic Registrar due to have completed action by end of May 2025.
- AB.25.05.3.2.5 *AB.24.10.5.2.3 Reasonable Adjustment to Deadline: Establishment of Task and Finish Group*
UPDATE: T&F Group has now met for the final time. For the outcome of its discussions see Matters Arising 3.2.1 below. Action closed.

The following matters arising were raised:

- AB.25.05.3.2.6 3.2.1 Reasonable Adjustments to Deadline Task and Finish Group (Minute AB.24.10.5.2.3 refers)
The Deputy Registrar reported that the final recommendation of the fortnightly group set up to analyse data, collate views and report back to Academic Board was that the 7 day extension should remain as a reasonable adjustment to a coursework deadline. Further, the Student Communications team will work with the Students' Union to focus on pre-emptive support available to students. A concerted push on inclusivity should also hopefully help students.

Work to be done on designing an applications process that will enable students to self-select, through Blackboard, those pieces of

assessment where they wish to have additional time during a specific time-period (e.g. 2 weeks). Also, as implementation work commences with a new CRM, how RA2D student information comes into the system will be reviewed.

AB.25.05.3.2.7

3.2.2 Artificial Intelligence (Minute AB.25.02.4.3.5 refers)

The Chair of UEIC reported on the robust deep dive discussion on AI and governance that took place at the April meeting of that committee. When noting the new governance developments, the need for an ethical perspective was emphasised. An AI risk descriptor will come to the next UEIC meeting, and it was highlighted that a framework may be necessary to ascertain which AI platforms UWE students should work with and which should be avoided.

In the discussion, the need for staff to receive guidance as well as students was highlighted. The Chair concluded that more work on the use of AI will be done through the appropriate committees.

AB.25.05.3.3

Chair's actions

Paper AB.25.05.03 was received.

AB.25.05.3.3.1

Members noted the following items approved under Chair's action since the last meeting on 26 February 2025:

- 1) Criminal Conviction Policy 2025
- 2) Policy and process for students under the age of 18 years
- 3) GCET Arabic proposal (approval of variant regulation)

AB.25.05.4

STANDING AGENDA ITEMS

AB.25.05.4.1

Vice-Chancellor's report

Paper AB.25.05.04 was received.

AB.25.05.4.1.1

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

AB.25.05.4.2

The Students' Union report

Paper AB.25.05.05 was received.

AB.25.05.4.2.1 The SU President and VP Education introduced their report, highlighting the Student Experience Awards which took place the previous evening. The DVC-Registrar confirmed that the event was very special and inspiring. The Chair commented that celebrating the exceptional efforts of UWE staff and students was important.

AB.25.05.4.2.2 The Chair then thanked the outgoing SU President for all the achievements that he and his 2024/25 team have accomplished. It will be crucial for the newly elected sabbatical team to build on what has come before.

AB.25.05.4.3 Thematic sub-committee business reports

Papers AB.25.05.06-09 were received.

AB.25.05.4.3.1 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.25.05.4.3.2 The Chair of the Learning Teaching and Student Experience Committee (LTSEC) reported that, on the meeting of 1 May 2025, there was discussion and endorsement of changes to the Academic Regulations, a helpful update on UWE Programmes with clarification on feedback and progress, a consideration of internal data on the forthcoming Degree Outcomes Statement, an update on the Access and Participation Plan, and a high-level data analysis on the 2024/25 Course Survey which yielded improved results on student experience. On the latter point, it was noted that, in its next meeting in June, LTSEC will receive assurance from the Colleges on the implementation of Course Survey insights.

AB.25.05.4.3.3 The Chair of the Research and Knowledge Exchange (RKEC) reported that, at the meeting of 29 April 2025, there was a draft presentation of the Research Beacons and RISE, College updates on "people, culture and environment" (a REF 2029 requirement), discussion and analysis of the latest research bidding activity, the latest on the Research Concordat action plan, a "spotlight" piece on the Centre for Sustainable Planning and Environments, an update on REF preparedness, an initial look at the PRES results, and the official noting of the appointment of the new PVC RKE.

AB.25.05.4.3.4 The Chair of the Strategic Academic Portfolio Group (SAPG) reported that, on the meeting of 15 April 2025, there were updates

from the Colleges on portfolio development (including the SEAC Initial Teaching Training reaccreditation submission), discussion on a costing model tool to better inform strategic decisions, plans for a Size and Shape strategic workshop in June, the results of a review of partnerships financial contributions, a look at some template tools arising from the collaborative provision end to end review, assurance of the effectiveness of critical controls to mitigate student recruitment risk, and the scrutiny of new partner proposals.

AB.25.05.4.3.5 The Chair of the University Ethics and Integrity Committee (UEIC) reported that, on the meeting of 1 April 2025, there was the previously mentioned deep dive discussion on AI and governance, as well as detailed scrutiny performed on the draft Ethical Careers Policy (which subsequent to the meeting has been reclassified as a framework), discussion of minor amendments to the Freedom of Speech and Whistleblowing policies, assurance from the College ethics committees and the UEIC sub-committees, a discussion on ethics application records management and clear principles through which to process paper records in deep storage, and UEIC's thanks to the retiring Research Governance Manager.

AB.25.05.4.3.6 Members of Academic Board confirmed that they were assured with regards to the delegated academic activities of the thematic sub-committees.

AB.25.05.5 ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

AB.25.05.5.1 Research update: REF preparedness and the RISE agenda
Paper AB.25.05.10 was received.

AB.25.05.5.1.1 Following initial discussion at the April RKEC, the DVC-Provost and Chair of RKEC invited Academic Board members to consider progress made in furthering excellence in two key areas of UWE research activity.

AB.25.05.5.1.2 It was reported that an update has been provided by the Research Excellence Group (REG) showing the latest REF 2029 preparations. It was noted that a set of common themes and key decision points have emerged from an institution-wide review of current portfolio of outputs and impacts undertaken in February-March 2025.

AB.25.05.5.1.3 It was further noted that, by December 2025, UWE will need to submit the REF 2029 Code of Practice. This will need to be processed through REG, RKEC, VCE and Academic Board. Decisions

will need to be made regarding configurations of the Units of Assessment (UoAs) so that they are tagged on HESA returns. Again, these decisions will need to go to VCE prior to Academic Board.

- AB.25.05.5.1.4 A draft presentation evidencing how UWE Bristol shapes the future of research, innovation, skills and enterprise (RISE) was also made available. The latest version of the *Transforming Tomorrow, Today* promotional document, prepared by the Research and External Engagement team, places significant emphasis on the work UWE does to engage with the region and contribute towards its economic growth. The RISE agenda is practically realised through a set of freshly defined and tightly articulated "research beacons of excellence" which, taken together, speaks to the University's strengths, points towards its future, and provides a platform upon which to communicate its research "story" to a global audience. It therefore enables UWE to celebrate its research activities not just as marketing collateral but as real, powerful and enabling narrative.
- AB.25.05.5.1.5 The Chair reported that UWE has already been "soft-testing" this document, sharing it with partners and indicating how it can be used. Initial conversations suggest that the Beacons align well with the agendas of associates, partners and visitors.
- AB.25.05.5.1.6 The DVC-Provost asked Academic Board members how the RISE-Beacons can be used to power the University going forward, to push the narrative from good to outstanding.
- AB.25.05.5.1.7 The following comments were raised in discussion:
- 1) In response to member questioning, it was clarified that RISE-Beacons is both a lens through which to demonstrate what UWE currently does well *and* what it will do in the future.
 - 2) This information can be used at UWE Open Days, although we are still in the early stages of using this as a communications platform.
 - 3) It was confirmed that the information could be cut and repackaged so that it can speak to the local growth plan, the industrial strategy, and/or investment in the South-West region.
 - 4) Although there may be political pressures against some of these research aspirations, it is important for these goals to be profiled and fought for. UWE needs to be publicly

problem solving, influencing, positioning, and navigating the green economy/net zero.

AB.25.05.6

ITEMS FOR APPROVAL OR ENDORSEMENT

AB.25.05.6.1

Freedom of Speech Policy and Code of Practice

Paper AB.25.05.11 was received.

AB.25.05.6.1.1

The Chief of Staff and Clerk to the Board of Governors invited members to consider and endorse to Board of Governors updates of the FoS policy and process.

AB.25.05.6.1.2

It was noted that UEIC had already given its scrutiny and that the changes constituted only minor amendments.

AB.25.05.6.1.3

Academic Board endorsed the policy to go to Board of Governors.

AB.25.05.6.2

Changes to the Academic Regulations 2025/26

Paper AB.25.05.12 was received.

AB.25.05.6.2.1

The Student Voice and Academic Policy Team Manager introduced amendments to the Academic Regulations based on a now standard cycle of updates.

AB.25.05.6.2.2

It was noted that UQSSC and LTSEC have both scrutinised and endorsed the changes. Pending possible further changes to clarification of the wording on the compensation and algorithm regulations, the proposed updates were approved by Academic Board.

AB.25.05.6.2.3

Section E of the Regulations on PGR is currently being scrutinised by the Doctoral Academy Sub-Committee and will be presented for approval to the July Academic Board [**Action:** SVAP Team Manager/ Secretary/ Officer].

AB.25.05.6.3

Academic Committee Elections

Paper AB.25.05.13 was received.

AB.25.05.6.3.1

The Academic Registrar introduced a paper that detailed those member vacancies that needed filling via an election in June/July 2025, together with an indicative timeline of the electoral arrangements. It was noted that some committees within the academic governance structure elect members to enhance the diversity of voice.

AB.25.05.6.3.2 Academic Board approved the arrangements with notice of the successful candidates to be published on 10 July 2025.

AB.25.05.7 ITEMS FOR ASSURANCE

AB.25.05.7.1 Academic Performance and Risk report (Academic Assurance)

Paper AB.25.05.14 was received.

AB.25.05.7.1.1 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.

AB.25.05.7.1.2 Members were informed that the corporate scorecard now features internal data for non-completion. This non-benchmarked data is showing a 23% increase, likely feeding through from a rise in non-continuation.

AB.25.05.7.1.3 Members of Academic Board were assured that robust management of corporate KPIs and academic risks continues, with risk statuses to be updated where necessary. Further action to progress performance to be taken forward by the relevant thematic sub-committees, with final oversight taken by the People and Academic Assurance (PAA) Committee on behalf of the Board of Governors.

AB.25.05.7.2 Strategic Plan 2024-26 update

Presentation was received.

AB.25.05.7.2.1 The DVC-Registrar presented the academic activities being progressed through the University's 2024-26 Strategic Plan together with alignment to the institution's KPIs.

AB.25.05.7.2.2 It was reported that significant work has been undertaken on the articulation of key results in the "Purpose" strand of the Strategy. Activities under the Africa Strategy were particularly noted, with strong, robust partnerships and a good pipeline being developed. A UWE Virtual Africa Centre was launched in May.

AB.25.05.7.2.3 The Chair confirmed that the Strategic Plan is on track and the Chief of Staff will circulate updates on the other strands ("People" and "Place").

AB.25.05.7.3 Governance Effectiveness review: update on action plan and training module info for members

Paper AB.25.05.15 was received.

AB.25.05.7.3.1 The Chief of Staff and Clerk to the Board of Governors reported on the latest progress on implementing recommendations arising from the external Halpin review into effective governance.

AB.25.05.7.3.2 It was noted that draft communication on Halpin implementation has been prepared for the wider University community and has been included in Annex B of the paper. Members were asked to provide feedback on this communication ahead of this release.

AB.25.05.7.3.3 Members were also asked to consider the establishment of a task and finish group to focus on progressing the specific considerations raised at the Academic Assurance workshop facilitated by Advance HE. The Board endorsed the establishment of this T&F group. Volunteers to make up the membership of this group were welcomed.

AB.25.05.7.3.4 Members were further asked to consider the process for nomination of an elected Academic Board Member to the Board of Governors. The Board endorsed this process to the Nominations and Governance Committee.

AB.25.05.7.3.5 Finally, it was also noted that the paper sets out training expectations to ensure that Academic Board members are equipped with the knowledge to conduct their business.

AB.25.05.7.3.6 The following points were raised in discussion:

- 1) Deep dives should be published to the wider University either in advance or, more practically, after the meeting.
- 2) The expectation on pre-meeting consultation with Board members' teams was discussed, with the Chair confirming that members of Academic Board, although representative of a particular community within UWE, do not perform the function of delegates.

AB.25.05.8 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

None to report.

AB.25.05.9 ITEMS FOR COMMUNICATION

AB.25.05.9.1 In this new section on the agenda, it was noted that there were no key messages to disseminate to the wider University community at this stage (beyond those matters discussed elsewhere).

AB.25.05.10	DATE(S) OF NEXT MEETING(S)
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AB.25.05.10.1	<p>Next meeting dates for academic year 2024/25:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 2 July 2025• 8 July 2025 (joint session with the Board of Governors)
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