UWE Bristol | University of the West of England

Board of Governors

Minutes of the meeting held on 10 December 2025 in 4Q005 on Frenchay Campus.

ACADEMIC BOARD

Present: Amanda Coffey (Chair), Tareem Asfour, Yvonne Beach, Paul Bennett, Mahfuza Binte Ali, Wendy Colvin, Olena Doran, Jennifer Dye, Corinne Funnell, Georgina Gough, Marc Griffiths, John Hancock, Khadiza Hossein, Matthew Jones, James Lee, Phil Legg, Jo Midgley, Cathy Minett-Smith, Lyn Newton, Marcus Pugh, Kos Siliafis, Muhammad Subhan, Nicola Temple, Mario Vafeas, Sarah Voss, Jenni Wilkinson

In attendance: Jodie Anstee, Jason Briddon, Hannah Cavender-Deere (Officer), Rachel Cowie, Chris Gledhill, Kevin Golden (deputising for Elena Marco), Tracey John, Mike Ratcliffe (Secretary), David Young (Officer)

Observers: None from the Board of Governors at this meeting.

Apologies: Steve West, Asad Zarif Awan, Elena Marco, Darren Reynolds, Vlasios Sarantinos, Margaret Simmons-Bird, Yarden Woolf

AB.25.12.1	WELCOME AND APOLOGIES
AB.25.12.1.1	The Chair welcomed members, especially those members new to their Academic Board roles in 2025/26. Apologies were recorded.
AB.25.12.1.2	No declarations of interest were received either in writing or verbally at the meeting.
AB.25.12.2	**DEEP DIVE/WORKSHOP**
AB.25.12.2.1	**UWE Regional Strategy** Paper AB.25.12.00 was received.
AB.25.12.2.1.1	The PVC for Regional Partnerships, Engagement and Innovation and the Director of REE gave a presentation outlining how UWE aims to strengthen its role as a regional anchor institution and

	accelerate progress on the RISE agenda through a 'partnership-first' approach.
AB.25.12.2.1.2	Key national and regional developments of relevance to UWE's regional strategy were highlighted. These included: 1. The Industrial Strategy, setting out eight UK sectors positioned for growth and targeted investment (IS8). Members were informed that UWE is beginning to see funding emerging through these routes, including UKRI and skills funding. 2. The Post-16 Education and Skills White Paper, which covers several areas pertinent to UWE, including innovation, enterprise and the wider education system. 3. The West of England Growth Strategy, which identifies regional sector strengths with which UWE can align. Members were advised that this includes closer employer alignment—supported by changes to apprenticeship levies and links to skills and growth—stronger FE education and improved pathways for high-quality training, alongside a push for greater flexibility in HE.
AB.25.12.2.1.3	It was noted that, for UWE to further progress its RISE agenda, the University can build on strong partnerships with regional partners and lean into the WECA growth strategy, which aligns with RISE in key respects. The importance of regional collaboration within an ecosystem of education and innovation was emphasised, including the need to understand when to collaborate and when to compete, and to build confidence in UWE's role alongside strong neighbouring universities.
AB.25.12.2.1.4	Members were informed that further work will be undertaken to further strengthen UWE's role in the civic space, particularly in relation to public and community engagement. This aligns with the University's mission to solve real-world problems and support student success. It was noted that funding opportunities can be attracted through building UWE's reputation and strategic partnerships. With partnerships an area of strength, UWE must focus on achieving impact and collaborating with purpose. The need to empower individuals across the University who are creating and sustaining relationships was emphasised.
AB.25.12.2.1.5	The work is being taken forward through the lens of the RISE agenda—an integrated, ecosystem-based approach—with the four beacons representing core areas of institutional strength.

AB.25.12.2.1.6	Break-out group discussions followed, with prompts inviting members to reflect on UWE's current performance in regional partnerships, lessons learned, and opportunities to build more effective and meaningful partnerships. Key points raised included: 1. Consideration of how UWE might embed itself more deeply within certain partnerships, such as the NHS, through an account management mindset. Members noted strong examples within Research Exchange of inside/outside roles that build trust with partners. A sector-based approach was suggested as the most viable route, with recognition that this may be more challenging in sectors beyond the NHS. It was noted that UWE does not currently have a CRM system to support this work, but there may be appetite to explore such a tool to enable visibility of activity across partner organisations, support shared ways of working, and strengthen UWE's professional approach. 2. A question was raised regarding how UWE assesses whether potential partners align with University values. It was noted that this is considered through committees and academic governance structures. Deep dives and due diligence processes were highlighted as essential. Work is underway to strengthen governance around contracts and to improve transparency regarding partner accounts and locations.
AB.25.12.3	**ACADEMIC BOARD BUSINESS**
AB.25.12.3.1	**Sub-committee terms of reference and business plans** Paper AB.25.12.01 was received.
AB.25.12.3.1.1	Members noted the terms of reference and the indicative business plans for the following committees that directly report to Academic Board. 1. Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Committee (LTSEC) - Business Plan only 2. Strategic Academic Portfolio Group (SAPG) 3. University Ethics and Integrity Committee (UEIC) 4. Research and Knowledge Exchange (RKEC)
AB.25.12.3.1.2	The Chair of LTSEC noted that further changes had been made to the membership since the previous meeting. Academic Board members approved the changes.
AB.25.12.3.1.3	

AB.25.12.3.1.4	The Chair of RKEC noted that Academic Board received only a provisional version of the Business Plan and Terms of Reference in October. Since then, RKEC has convened and no further substantive changes have been made. Members officially approved the ToR and Plan. The Chair of UEIC noted a minor change to the membership – the extra wording "or external nominee" added to the independent Board of Governors member role. Members approved this change.
AB.25.12.3.1.5	The Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Registrar noted that more clarity was perhaps needed in the UEIC Terms of Reference regarding the ethical framework for partnership decision-making. [**Action:** The DVC-Registrar and Chair of UEIC to further review the terms of reference and membership]
AB.25.12.4	**MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING**
AB.25.12.4.1	**Previous minutes** Paper AB.25.12.02 was received.
AB.25.12.4.1.1	Members approved the minutes of the meeting held on 8 October 2025.
AB.25.12.4.2	**Action sheet and matters arising** Paper AB.25.12.03 was received.
AB.25.12.4.2.1	The following updates were noted on the action sheet: AB.25.07.5.1.2 - Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers – monitoring of actions UPDATE: A short interim report was prepared for PAAC in November 2025 to assure Board of Governors on progress on the Concordat implementation plan. This interim paper was considered at RKEC on 21 October. The full annual report will initially be considered by RKEC and then escalated to Academic Board in the Autumn of 2026.
AB.25.12.4.2.2	AB.25.07.5.2.3 - Cyberattack resilience (from a student completion perspective) UPDATE: See matters arising.
AB.25.12.4.2.3	AB.25.07.5.6.3 - External Speaker policy

AB.25.12.4.2.4 AB.25.12.4.2.5	UPDATE: The focus has been on establishing a new events guide. This was published on 17 November. The External Speakers guidance will be reviewed and updated to support this. <u>Matters arising</u> 4.2.1. Academic Assurance Task and Finish Group The Secretary noted that the Group was created as an action from an earlier meeting of Academic Board. The membership has been agreed, but since then the Committee of University Chairs has been reviewing the overall documentation on academic governance. The Group is waiting to convene until further progress has been made. 4.2.2 Cyberattack resilience: evaluation of UWE's resilience – verbal update The Chief of Staff noted that this will be monitored in the action sheet.
AB.25.12.4.3	***Chair's actions** Paper AB.25.12.04 was received.
AB.25.12.4.3.1	Members noted the following items approved under Chair's action since the last meeting: 1. Emeritus Professor Appointment: Jonathan Benger
AB.25.12.5	**STANDING AGENDA ITEMS**
AB.25.12.5.1	**Vice-Chancellor's report** Paper AB.25.12.05 was received.
AB.25.12.5.1.1	Members noted the VC's report which covered the following areas: 1) An update on Strategic Risks; 2) The decision to support recruitment to PGT provision at the Bristol Old Vic Theatre School in 2026/27; 3) An update on the first Senior Leadership Forum, the 4 November EDI Advisory Group meeting; 4) The West of England Mayor Visit; 5) The significant increase in UWE's position in the QS Sustainability Rankings 2026; 6) The VC's new position as the Government's HE Student Support Champion; 7) Higher Education Policy and Sector Developments;

	8) Board of Governors' business.
AB.25.12.5.2	**The Students' Union report** Paper AB.25.12.6 was received.
AB.25.12.5.2.1	The SU President and VP Education introduced the report, noting the following: 1) An increase in student rep sign up and proportion of reps trained, Lead School Rep recruitment and training; 2) PGR representation and upcoming elections; 3) The new UWE sports strategy; 4) Recent attendance at the November NUS conference. The Students' Union further highlighted the success of the 'Movember' campaign, with high levels of engagement from students and clubs/teams. They also noted ongoing work on a Democracy and Governance review.
AB.25.12.5.3	**Thematic sub-committee business reports** Papers AB.25.12.7-10 were received.
AB.25.12.5.3.1	Members were updated on the business considered and the decisions and recommendations taken by the thematic sub-committees of Academic Board.
AB.25.12.5.3.2	The Chair of LTSEC noted that, at the meeting on the 18 November 2025, members received a summary of findings from UWE's Collaborative Provision Review, which now has an established monitoring group that reports to LTSEC and SAPG. It was reported that LTSEC endorsed the Annual Report on Quality and Standards from UQSSC, received a presentation on the latest developments in Teaching Excellence, with a learning and teaching showcase already live on a soft-launch basis, as well as a new professional development framework in development. Members also received an update on the Degree Outcomes Data, Awarding Gaps and Non-Continuation and discussed the pilot of a new academic integrity workshop for first-time assessment offences.
AB.25.12.5.3.3	The Chair of RKEC noted that, at the meeting of the 21 October 2025, the committee received an update on UWE's REF preparation work and discussed the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers. Members received a presentation on the latest Knowledge Excellence Framework results, noting that UWE continues to perform well, and reviewed the Research Strategy Risk descriptor, noting concerns about external research

	funding that have been escalated to a critical risk. Further work is being done on the latter to understand the causes and put controls in place.
AB.25.12.5.3.4	The Chair of SAPG noted that, at the meeting of 17 November 2025, members reviewed an external environment scan, which highlighted national conversations around skills provision across Levels 2–8. The Committee discussed the potential opportunities this presents for UWE and heard that additional horizon scanning has been commissioned to further inform the Committee's future work. A presentation on the recent Post-16 Education and Skills White Paper was received; members expressed optimism about the opportunities to build on UWE's strengths as a practice-led institution. The Committee also discussed the proposed flat-rate international student tax. UWE wants to grow in international partnerships—both strengthening existing relationships and pursuing new opportunities such as branch campuses and expansion into new territories. Members emphasised the importance of assessing risks alongside potential benefits. Work on student recruitment risk has now been completed and will be reported back at the next meeting.
AB.25.12.5.3.5	A question was raised about the criteria for entering new partnerships, and how financial imperatives are balanced alongside other considerations to inform decision making. It was noted that quality is the primary criterion alongside the student experience. Once these are assured, the University assesses financial viability. Additional due diligence includes examining legal frameworks, ethical considerations, staff experience, and alignment of institutional missions and values.
AB.25.12.5.3.6	The Chair of UEIC noted that, at the meeting of the 4 November 2025, the Committee discussed use of AI in research and heard that a guidance document for researchers is currently being finalised. A presentation was delivered by the Assistant Director of EDI on the ethical consideration of sex and gender within research projects. Work is underway to revise ethics application forms to ensure clearer, more accessible, and non-discriminatory language. The Committee also noted ongoing work to streamline the ethics application system to improve the experience for staff, committees, and scrutineers, as well as an audit of the student ethics system, ensuring appropriate engagement with relevant modules. The procedures for the investigation of research misconduct are currently being finalised, with a completed draft expected to be

AB.25.12.5.3.7	presented at the February meeting. Assurance reports from the subcommittees were also received. Based on the above reports, Academic Board was assured that University activity delegated to its thematic committees was being appropriately scrutinised and/or progressed.
AB.25.12.6	**ITEMS FOR ASSURANCE**
AB.25.12.6.1	**Academic Performance and Risk report (Academic Assurance)** Paper AB.25.12.11 was received.
AB.25.12.6.1.1	Members noted a short update on academic assurance monitoring, with further reporting to come to the February meeting.
AB.25.12.7	**ITEMS FOR APPROVAL OR ENDORSEMENT**
AB.25.12.7.1	**Annual Quality Report, 2024/25** Paper AB.25.12.12 was received.
AB.25.12.7.1.1	The Secretary introduced the report, which summarises the actions the University undertakes to assure itself of programme quality and the student experience. The report consolidates the core activities UWE is undertaking to meet the requirements of the OfS and to assure the Board of Governors, alongside the more detailed work undertaken throughout the year—such as analysis of degree outcomes and awarding gaps—which provides additional assurance to the Board.
AB.25.12.7.1.2	The Secretary noted that there are three areas where continued vigilance is required: 1) Awarding gaps, where the University is not yet satisfied with progress; 2) Collaborative provision, where systems and experience are strong; external environment is highly contested; and where the recommendations from the Collaborative provision review are still being embedded. 3) Apprenticeships, due to significant sector-wide change.
AB.25.12.7.1.3	The report concludes with a list of actions to support the University's forward direction.
AB.25.12.7.1.4	It was noted that the report had been reviewed by UQSSC and LTSEC, and that UWE is on a strong footing to provide assurance

AB.25.12.7.1.5	to the Board of Governors. The actions captured are intended to position the University well for anticipated future regulatory requirements, and the report will need to be reframed in line with the revised Teaching Excellence Framework. During discussion, feedback was received on making delivery timescales clearer in the report. A query was raised about the new degree algorithm, and it was confirmed that a report will progress through the committee structure in the new year. Responding to a query, the Secretary confirmed that OfS currently has no student attendance metric; although universities recognise its importance for achievement, it is not something the regulator currently requires reporting on.
AB.25.12.7.1.6	The annual report was endorsed to PAAC before the Board of Governors.
AB.25.12.7.2	**Annual Statement on Research Integrity 2024/25** Paper AB.25.12.13 was received.
AB.25.12.7.2.1	The Chair of UEIC introduced the report, noting that it will be ultimately published on the University website in line with regulatory requirements and that it follows the template developed by the Research Integrity Office.
AB.25.12.7.2.2	The Committee noted how the University promotes research integrity and a positive research culture. Future plans include work relating to AI, expanded ethics training, and the implementation of a new ethics processing system.
AB.25.12.7.2.3	The Chair of UEIC outlined the University's approach to handling research misconduct. It was noted that the University is required to report cases and that a consistent nil return is viewed unfavourably, as the expectation is that the report demonstrates awareness and effective escalation pathways. Confidence was expressed that the relevant systems are functioning as intended.
AB.25.12.7.2.4	An error identified on page 6 will be corrected prior to submission. It was also noted that the report covers staff and postgraduate researchers, with PGR students included for the first time.
AB.25.12.7.2.5	Member feedback on the report was shared, including the suggestion that the University should explore ways to make information about the structure and processes of research ethics committees and assurance mechanisms more accessible to

	research staff. The importance of effectively cascading information to researchers at all levels was emphasised.
AB.25.12.7.2.6	The annual statement was endorsed to PAAC before the Board of Governors.
AB.25.12.7.3	**Admissions Policy 2026** Paper AB.25.12.14 was received.
AB.25.12.7.3.1	Members received and approved the updated Admissions Policy for 2026 entry.
AB.25.12.7.4	**Criminal Convictions Policy 2026** Paper AB.25.12.15 was received.
AB.25.12.7.4.1	Members received and approved updates to the policy for 2026 entry.
AB.25.12.7.5	**Proposal for an addition to UWE's Approved Postgraduate Awards: Master's Degree (with International Pre-Master's)** Paper AB.25.12.16 was received.
AB.25.12.7.5.1	The Secretary introduced a proposal to add to UWE's Approved Postgraduate Awards within the Academic Regulations.
AB.25.12.7.5.2	The proposal includes transitioning the current partnership model with Kaplan (UWE Bristol International College) to a validated academic partnership. The proposal would allow for an integrated route in which students could receive an award with more than 180 credits while retaining the existing degree title. This change reflects developments across the sector, with several pathway providers, including Kaplan, adopting integrated models to support smoother progression for international students. This integration would remove the need for students to leave the UK between sponsorship periods, which is a barrier to progression.
AB.25.12.7.5.3	A question was raised about the implementation timeline and routes to entry. It was confirmed that an approval panel would consider the full details, but students would not be locked into a particular route. It was also clarified that the integrated model applies specifically to students progressing through UEBIC and does not affect students unless they choose to undertake a pre-master's programme. Work is underway to develop the integrated CAS arrangements, which would remove the need for a

AB.25.12.7.5.4	visa reapplication provided students meet all academic and progression requirements. It was emphasised that students following the pre-master's route should not be disadvantaged. Members commended the proposal, describing it as innovative and sector leading. The proposal was endorsed to the Board of Governors.
AB.25.12.8	**ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**
AB.25.12.8.1	**Academic Board Scheme of Delegated Authority** Verbal update.
AB.25.12.8.1.1	The Head of Governance shared a verbal update on the significant progress that been made following the 2024 Halpin review. Work is underway to align and consolidate the Academic Board Scheme of Delegation with that of the Board of Governors, using Article 3 as a framework to cluster activities, identify reporting routes, and clarify lines of responsibility.
AB.25.12.8.1.2	It was reported that the Committee of University Chairs is currently reviewing the higher education scheme of governance. The intention is to consider the impact of these changes and their implications for UWE before bringing the revised Scheme of Delegation back to Academic Board for approval.
AB.25.12.8.2	**Update on training and development for Academic Board members** Paper AB.25.12.17 was received.
AB.25.12.8.2.1	The Secretary introduced a report to update on progress made in training and development for Academic Board members, noting the aggregated completion rates of essential and recommended modules for members.
AB.25.12.8.2.2	It was noted that good progress has been made on completion of the Anti-Racism Module 1. Module 2 has only been released since the start of the current academic year and is now mandatory for all staff. Members were also encouraged to complete the Freedom of Speech module, which forms part of the agreed suite of training for Academic Board. It was noted that training reminders had been circulated to all staff via the weekly news update on Monday.
AB.25.12.8.2.3	

	Members were encouraged to ensure completion of all required training.
AB.25.12.8.3	**Posthumous Awards Report, 2024/25** Paper AB.25.12.18 was received.
AB.25.12.8.3.1	Members noted the posthumous awards made during the preceding academic year.
AB.25.12.8.4	**Updating of TSI Variant Regulations** Paper AB.25.12.19 was received.
AB.25.12.8.4.1	Members noted that the Transport and Telecommunication Institute regulations have been updated to reflect that the maximum number of credits is now 156 to align to the Latvian and European Qualification Framework.
AB.25.12.9	**ANY OTHER BUSINESS**
	None to report.
AB.25.12.10	**DATE(S) OF NEXT MEETING(S)**
	Next meeting dates for 2025/26: • 25 February 2026 • 13 May 2026 • 1 July 2026 • 8 July 2026 (joint workshop with Board of Governors)