Board of Governors

Minutes of the meeting held on 13 May 2026 in EP1-015 on Frenchay Campus.

ACADEMIC BOARD

Present: Steve West (Chair), Yvonne Beach, Mahfuza Binte Ali, Amanda Coffey, Wendy Colvin, Olena Doran, Jennifer Dye, Xenia Giagli, Pujan Ghosh, Sarah Grabham, Xenia Giagli, Georgina Gough, John Hancock, Antony Hill (covering James Lee), Khadiza Hossain, Tracey John, Matthew Jones, Phil Legg, Jackie Rogers (covering Cathy Minett-Smith), Kos Siliafis, Muhammad Subhan, Nicola Temple, Mario Vafeas, Sarah Voss, Jenni Wilkinson

In attendance: Jodie Anstee, Harriet Castor Jeffery, Hannah Cavender-Deere, Rachel Cowie (Secretary), Mo Ebengho, Helena Kelynack, David Young (Officer)

Observers: None in attendance.

Apologies: Jason Briddon, Tod Burton, Corinne Funnell, Chris Gledhill, Marc Griffiths, James Lee, Jo Midgley, Cathy Minett-Smith, Lyn Newton, Marcus Pugh, Darren Reynolds, Vlasios Sarantinos, Asad Zarif Awan

AB.26.05.1	**WELCOME AND APOLOGIES**
AB.26.05.1.1	The Chair welcomed members and those in attendance, including the incoming SU President-elect and the VP-Education-elect. Apologies were recorded in the normal way.
AB.26.05.1.2	No declarations of interest were received either in writing or verbally at the meeting.
AB.26.05.2	**DEEP DIVE/WORKSHOP**
AB.26.05.2.1	**Block delivery**
	Presentation.
AB.26.05.2.1.1	The Deputy Registrar introduced an opportunity to positively engage with block delivery and to look in detail at possible ways forward.

AB.26.05.2.1.2	Members were informed about the concept behind block delivery, the immersive educational model in which potentially only one module would be delivered at a time, with concentrated timetables to make the best use of a student's time on campus, integrated assessment, and timelier retrieval or resit opportunities.
AB.26.05.2.1.3	A pressing need to think practically about block delivery is evidenced by insights from the 2026 Course Survey, existing sector practice, and other considerations such as student working practices, and 40% of UWE students now being classified as 'commuters' (living 10+ miles from campus).
AB.26.05.2.1.4	Members of the Board broke out into groups, containing both students and staff, to discuss what would need to be true for a block delivery model to work. Groups explored areas such as operational risk, the student experience, support for new academic skills, the empowering of programme teams, the pros and cons of "rapid" retrieval, curriculum design, changes to regulations and exam boards, and student cognitive pressures.
AB.26.05.2.1.5	The conclusion of the session emphasised that there is a clear need to be bold. Rather than shoehorning in changes, we must be ready to think differently in terms of embracing the complexity of student lives, being responsive to international partner requests for shorter UK study opportunities, and structuring more effectively and more professionally the contemporary student journey.
AB.26.05.3	**MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING**
AB.26.05.3.1	**Previous minutes** Paper AB.26.05.01 was received.
AB.26.05.3.1.1	Members approved the minutes of the meeting held on 25 February 2026.
AB.26.05.3.2	**Action sheet and matters arising** Paper AB.26.05.02 was received.
AB.26.05.3.2.1	The following updates were noted on the action sheet: AB.25.12.3.1.5 - To further review the terms of reference and

	membership regarding the ethical framework for partnership decision-making. UPDATE: DVC-Registrar and Chair of UEIC currently liaising on the matter.
AB.26.05.3.2.2	AB.25.07.5.1.2 - Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers: RKEC will continue to monitor actions during 2025/26 and provide an assurance report to Academic Board. UPDATE: The full annual report will initially be considered by RKEC and then escalated to Academic Board in the autumn of 2026.
AB.26.05.3.2.3	AB.25.07.5.2.3 - Business continuity: the Chair commissioned an evaluation of UWE's resilience from a student completion perspective in the event of a cyber-attack. UPDATE: Action can be closed as we now have a playbook that informs wider considerations and which will be tracked by the Executive.
AB.26.05.3.2.4	AB.25.07.5.6.3 - Interaction noted between the External Speaker Policy and the University's Freedom of Speech Policy. Approval of External Speaker Policy to be reviewed alongside the Freedom of Speech policy to ensure alignment with, and a consistent approach towards, the recently released OfS guidance on the matter. UPDATE: Chief of Staff and General Counsel have liaised with colleagues from the Events team and Safeguarding. The revised document is now ready for Chair's approval.
AB.26.05.3.2.5	Matters arising: 3.2.1 An update on mandatory training and development for Academic Board members was received, with it being noted that the Anti Racism module has 81% uptake and Freedom of Speech 66%. The Chair noted these improved figures but asked members to individually check their records as the system may not be pulling through every completion.
AB.26.05.3.3	***Chair's actions** Paper AB.26.05.03 was received.
AB.26.05.3.3.1	Members noted the following items approved under Chair's action since the last meeting: 1. City of Bristol College Partnership Renewal 2. Amendment to Academic Committee Calendar 3. Mulberry Bush Organisation Partnership Renewal
AB.26.05.4	**STANDING AGENDA ITEMS**

AB.26.05.4.1	**Vice-Chancellor's report** Paper AB.26.05.04 was received.
AB.26.05.4.1.1 AB.26.05.4.1.2 AB.26.05.4.1.3	The VC's report, covering issues relevant to the University and the wider sector, was received by members. The Chair noted that this report constitutes a snapshot of continually reviewed risk. The UEIC Chair asked about the impact on UWE of the recent University of Sussex ruling. The Chair responded that this judicial outcome has created clear boundaries as to the investigative limits of the Office for Students (OfS). The Chair added that OfS aspires to be a proportionate evidence-based regulator, and this ruling will hopefully allow them to reflect on their core purpose in achieving this objective.
AB.26.05.4.2	**The Students' Union report** Paper AB.26.05.05 was received.
AB.26.05.4.2.1 AB.26.05.4.2.2	The VP-Education introduced the report, with the following being highlighted: 1) Continuing progress in student representation (1,020 students now signed up as programme reps with 959 trained); 2) Updates on ongoing PGR elections, with the result to be announced on 22 May; 3) The Student Consultation Panel now has 404 members, and has supported 43 consultation activities; 4) Sports Club and Society memberships now stand at 7,603 (20% of the UWE student population); 5) Latest on the integration of the SU into the new Glenside space; 6) Confirmation of the new SU sabbatical officers following elections in March. The Chair thanked the outgoing SU President and VP-Education for their hard work and significant progress achieved across various areas. The baton is now passed to the newly elected sabbatical team, and they will have a solid basis upon which to build.
AB.26.05.4.3	**Thematic sub-committee business reports** Papers AB.26.05.06-09 were received.
AB.26.05.4.3.1	Members were updated on the business considered and the decisions and recommendations taken by the thematic sub-committees of Academic Board.

AB.26.05.4.3.2	The Chair of LTSEC noted that, at the meeting on 22 April 2026, members discussed the Teaching Excellence Framework, including identifying "Bronze" areas of concern and inconsistency. There was also an initial consideration of the Collaborative Provision Annual Report 2024/25, an endorsement of the direction of travel of the 2026/27 Intervention Strategy, an endorsement (to Academic Board) of the 2023/24 Degree Outcomes Statement, and a high-level analysis of the Course Survey.
AB.26.05.4.3.3	The Chair of RKEC noted that, at the meeting on 24 March 2026, the Committee had a robust conversation about "working differently" in the new research landscape, latest assurance on REF2029 preparedness, more limited assurance on the risk threat to research income targets, and a discussion on the Advanced Manufacturing, Security and Defence statement ahead of the Defence Universities Alliance (DUA) application.
AB.26.05.4.3.4	The Chair of SAPG noted that, at the meeting on 28 April 2026, members received valuable insight from the Regional Partnerships Advisory Group (RPAG) and the International Partnerships Advisory Group (IPAG), considered a series of partner and programme development proposals, and received an update of the Student Recruitment Strategic Risk to reflect the Fit for Future portfolio review.
AB.26.05.4.3.5	The Chair of UEIC noted that, at the meeting on 15 April 2026, the Committee substantially considered a retrospective ethics application (while noting such approvals should not be the norm), a debate on embedding the ethical use of smart glasses within existing UWE frameworks, a new procedure for the Nagoya Protocol, the revised Code of Practice for Research, an update on ethics processing times, and assurance reports from the sub-committees. Also discussed was the revised Procedure to Investigate Breaches of Research Integrity to bring UWE in line with the latest UKRIO terminology. Both with this new procedure and the existing process, the University is in a position to swiftly adjudicate cases as and when they appear. The UEIC Chair reported on recent cases where our procedures have been/are currently being enacted.
AB.26.05.4.3.6	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.26.05.5	**ITEMS FOR APPROVAL OR ENDORSEMENT**

AB.26.05.5.1	**Degree Outcomes Statement and OfS Requirements on Bachelors' Degree Classification Algorithms** Paper AB.26.05.10 was received.
AB.26.05.5.1.1 AB.26.05.5.1.2 AB.26.05.5.1.3 AB.26.05.5.1.4 AB.26.05.5.1.5	The Secretary introduced the draft statement covering degree outcomes for the 2023/24 academic year. Academic Board was informed that, looking at the longitudinal data, the proportion of UWE students attaining a good honours degree and attaining a first in 2023/24 is essentially the same as it was in 2018/19. Comparatively we track just below the sector average. Members were assured that the University is taking action to maintain good standards over the long-term. However, the challenge remains to retain our consistent proportions while securing outstanding outcomes for all student groups through the closing of awarding gaps. It was further noted that the Office for Students has invited universities to assure themselves that the method by which they calculate their degree outcomes is not causing grade inflation. Members were informed that UWE's relatively recent change to its degree algorithm reduced the amount of 'discounting' of credit, but the fact that some discounting remains needs to be reported to the OfS. However, our chosen method is not an outlier in the sector and furthermore has not evidenced any negative impact. Therefore, there is no current expectation that further revision of this algorithm is required. The nominated readers confirmed that the University's method for calculating degree outcomes is robust, compliant, and aligned with sector standards. From an Anti-Racism perspective, there is a need to move beyond monitoring and describing awarding gaps to actively addressing them through a structured action plan. It is important to use sensitive, intersectional data analysis to ensure changes reduce disadvantage, and that any future algorithm revisions are impact-assessed to avoid reinforcing inequities for global majority students. Academic Board endorsed to Board of Governors the draft statement.
AB.26.05.5.2	**Academic Committee Elections, June-July 2026** Paper AB.26.05.11 was received.
AB.26.05.5.2.1	The Academic Governance Manager introduced a paper that detailed those member vacancies that needed filling via an election in

AB.26.05.5.2.2 AB.26.05.5.2.3	June/July 2026, 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, and that, with the potential help of the Colleges, the forthcoming election was an opportunity to diversify that voice still further. Academic Board approved the arrangements with notice of the successful candidates to be published on 9 July 2026.
AB.26.05.5.3	**Audit of Chair's actions – proposed process for 2026/27** Paper AB.26.05.12 was received.
AB.26.05.5.3.1 AB.26.05.5.3.2	The Secretary introduced a proposed new process for 2026/27 in which up to two Academic Board members will be asked to review Chair’s actions made at Academic Board and its four sub-committees (LTSEC, SAPG, RKEC and UEIC). It was noted that the proposal will enhance cross-governance consistency. Academic Board approved this new procedure.
AB.26.05.6	**ITEMS FOR ASSURANCE**
AB.26.05.6.1	**Academic Performance and Risk report (Academic Assurance)** Paper AB.26.05.14 was received.
AB.26.05.6.1.1 AB.26.05.6.1.2 AB.26.05.6.1.3	The DVC-Provost introduced an update drawing together the University’s academic-related KPI targets and recently streamlined approach to the management of strategic and tactical academic risks. It was noted that the only update on KPI performance since February was a partial dataset on GOS positive outcomes (a performance of 77%, reduced from 80%). Members requested confirmation that international students also fed into the GOS data (which they do, although reach-out to those students needs to improve), questioned how we can optimise student responses generally to this survey, and discussed how we can use this data to more efficiently and creatively prepare and upskill our students for entering the full range of today’s working landscape, including SMEs, sole traders and portfolio-based work. In terms of risk, Academic Board members were reminded that the student Wellbeing Risk has been realigned to become a more focused Student Welfare Risk. High likelihood risk statements recently evaluated by the committees were highlighted.

AB.26.05.6.1.4	Members commented about the threat to the sector of fraud (Student Recruitment risk register), how the University can enhance co-ordination when it comes to utilising the Student Welfare risk register, and how we can ensure we have more quality-based consistency with partners (Student Experience risk register).
AB.26.05.7	**ACADEMIC BOARD BUSINESS**
AB.26.05.7.1	**Annual review of Chair's actions** Verbal update.
AB.26.05.7.1.1	The Dean and Head of School of Architecture and Environment volunteered to undertake the annual audit of decisions taken by Chair's action (i.e. under the existing arrangements – see AB.26.05.5.3.1 above).
AB.26.05.8	**ITEMS FOR COMMUNICATION**
AB.26.05.8.1	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.26.05.9	**ANY OTHER BUSINESS**
AB.26.05.9.1	None to note.
AB.26.05.10	**DATE(S) OF NEXT MEETING(S)**
AB.26.05.10.1	Next meeting dates for 2025/26: • 1 July 2026 • 8 July 2026 (joint workshop with Board of Governors)