



Board of Governors

ACADEMIC BOARD

Minutes of the meeting held on 2 July 2025 in Room 2E027 on Frenchay Campus.

Present: Steve West (Chair), Kwaku Baah, Georgie Benford, Jacqueline Butler, Peter Clegg, Amanda Coffey, Wendy Colvin, Georgina Gough, Bernhard Gross, John Hancock, Khadiza Hossain, James Lee, Phil Legg, Elena Marco, Jo Michell, Jo Midgley, Marcus Pugh, Darren Reynolds, Jackie Rogers, Vlasios Sarantinos, Andrew Simpson, Nicola Temple, Yarden Woolf, Asad Zarif Awan

Apologies: Jodie Anstee, Sasirindu Bandara, Yvonne Beach, Gracie Bell, Jason Briddon, Gareth Edwards, Chris Gledhill, Marc Griffiths, Katie Jenkins, James MacDonald, Sarah Voss, Jenni Wilkinson, Dan Wood

In attendance: Rachel Cowie, Heather Moyes (Secretary), Madeline Toy (item 5.6), Rose Ward (item 5.6), David Young (Officer)

Observers: Ian MacKenzie from the Board of Governors

AB.25.07.1 WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

AB.25.07.1.1 The Chair welcomed members, particularly Prof Darren Reynolds, the newly appointed PVC for Research and Knowledge Exchange; Ian MacKenzie, the lay member of the Board of Governors attending in an observational capacity; and Asad Zarif Awan, the incoming SU President.

AB.25.07.1.2 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 that were specific to the current agenda. However, following the meeting, Marcus Pugh, the technical representative, wished it to be noted that he has a personal friendship with Ed Rowberry, new President of Bristol Chamber & Initiative.

AB.25.07.2**WORKSHOP/DEEP DIVE****AB.25.07.2.1****Shaping our Future**

Presentation was received.

AB.25.07.2.1.1

The DVC-Provost introduced a presentation that reflected on achievements at the mid-way point in the implementation of *Strategy 2030: Transforming Futures*, together with ongoing strategic priorities.

AB.25.07.2.1.2

The slides considered progress made over the past five years against the Strategy's three pillars of Purpose, People, and Place. The Chair highlighted the significant work accomplished as a testament to the value of UWE working as a community.

AB.25.07.2.1.3

Other comments were as follows:

- 1) The extension of support for staff (incl. anti-bullying measures) has been impressive.
- 2) There has been a greater opportunity and diversity of teaching and learning.
- 3) The campus has become commendably sustainable, and staff and students are fortunate to have such green spaces.
- 4) UWE has developed an excellent external reputation in cyber security.
- 5) Accommodation issues have noticeably decreased during the past several years.

AB.25.07.2.1.4

The presentation then focused on the key strategic objectives set out in the 2024-26 strategic plan, highlighting what had been delivered in 2024/25, planned key results for 2025/26 and work underway to define the key priorities for 2026/27.

AB.25.07.2.1.5

Members were informed about the University's RISE initiative (Research, Innovation, Skills and Enterprise) launching officially that day. RISE aims to capture the public's imagination about how UWE drives societal change and improves lives through collaboration, working with industry, public sector organisations and our local community to challenge current conventions and knowledge. Members were encouraged to view on the staff intranet the recording of a recent launch presentation which sets out how every staff member has a role in championing this narrative of creativity and impact. RISE encourages the use of individual case-studies to illustrate UWE's transformative potential.

AB.25.07.3 MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

AB.25.07.3.1 Previous minutes

Paper AB.25.07.01 was received.

AB.25.07.3.1.1 Members approved the minutes of the meeting held on 7 May 2025 pending the following minor amendment: in AB.25.05.2.1.2, "LLL" to be amended to "LLE" to indicate the correct abbreviation of the Lifelong Learning Entitlement [**Action:** Committee Officer].

AB.25.07.3.2 Action sheet and matters arising

Paper AB.25.07.02 was received.

AB.25.07.3.2.1 Members noted that the majority of actions on the action sheet were now closed. Updates were noted on the following ongoing actions:

AB.25.07.3.2.2 *AB.05.6.2.3 - Section E of the Academic Regulations on PGR to be presented for approval at the July Academic Board.*

UPDATE: Some further work on the PGR regulations is needed to address the outcome of a recent student complaint. The regulations will be considered again by DASC on 8 July with a view for LTSEC endorsement and Academic Board approval via Chair's action before the end of July. To be reported at the Academic Board in October 2025.

AB.25.07.3.2.3 *AB.25.05.2.1.5 - Imaginative and forward-thinking decisions on Strategy 2050 to be revisited in further Academic Boards and to be reflected on future business plans.*

UPDATE: 25/26 Business Plan to be gradually formulated over the summer.

AB.25.07.3.2.4 *AB.24.12.6.1.5 - To strengthen the Student Voice, a student-friendly version of the Quality report to be prepared and sent to the Students' Union.*

UPDATE: A two-page version is currently in draft and subject to discussion with the new SU Presidents Team.

AB.25.07.4 STANDING AGENDA ITEMS

AB.25.07.4.1 Vice-Chancellor's report

Paper AB.25.07.03 was received.

AB.25.07.4.1.1 Members noted for information the Chair's update on strategic matters relevant to the University and the wider sector.

AB.25.07.4.1.2 Academic Board noted the collaborative work that UWE is doing to further the regional industrial strategy and develop a coherent growth plan for the West of England.

AB.25.07.4.1.3 The Board also noted the recent Freedom of Speech guidance issued by the OfS ahead of the new legislative duties coming into force on 1 August. A piece of work is currently in process by the VCO to align this guidance/these duties with the University's Freedom of Speech Policy (which was considered by Academic Board in May). A further Academic Board session will be held in the autumn [**Action:** Secretary/ Officer].

AB.25.07.4.1.4 There was also discussion on the transition to green industries, and the robust processes and joined-up approach taken against "green-washing" by UWE via its committee work and the articles of its procurement policy.

AB.25.07.4.2 The Students' Union report
Paper AB.25.07.04 was received.

AB.25.07.4.2.1 The new Students' Union President introduced himself to the Board and the Vice-President Education introduced both the main report and the highlights from the 2024/25 Students' Union Impact Report.

AB.25.07.4.2.2 The Impact Report featured data-points evidencing achievements in the green sustainability agenda, anti-sexual violence campaigning, student rep training, committee memberships and engagement, team sports, and election turnout. The Chair acknowledged these and other positive developments and hoped that they would be reflected in the forthcoming NSS.

AB.25.07.4.2.3 There was further discussion on the reasons for the higher voter turnout, and also concern expressed that, although international students have taken an increased interest in student democracy, a challenge exists to counter voter apathy amongst home students.

AB.25.07.4.3 Thematic sub-committee business reports
Papers AB.25.07.05-08 were received.

AB.25.07.4.3.1 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.25.07.4.3.2 The Chair of the Learning Teaching and Student Experience Committee (LTSEC) reported that, on the meeting of 5 June 2025, there was a refreshing of the student outcomes/experience risk registers (with the UK/ international student awarding gap added to the former), a discussion of the pause in TEF 2027, and endorsement of the updated Student Protection Plan, 2023/24 Degree Outcomes Statement, updated Apprenticeship Self-Assessment Report and Quality Improvement Plan, and the Annual Assurance Report. A paper summarising progress on UWE's Access Participation Plan (APP) 2024-25 to 2027-28 was shared with Academic Board members. There was subsequent discussion on what should be done to help recognise the APP as a priority and the steps currently being taken to increase institutional capability in evaluation.
- AB.25.07.4.3.3 The Chair of the Research and Knowledge Exchange (RKEC) reported that, at the meeting of 12 June 2025, there was a further update on REF preparedness (specifically Unit of Assessment configuration and the autumn timeline to finalise the Code of Practice), an endorsement of the Research Concordat action plan, and a review of research strategy risk now incorporated into the performance and risk paper below (item AB.25.07.6.2).
- AB.25.07.4.3.4 The Chair of the Strategic Academic Portfolio Group (SAPG) reported that, on the meeting of 3 June 2025, there were discussions and a demonstration of a new Subject Data Insight Dashboard that will give Schools and Colleges a new programme-visibility tool. The slides of the presentation were shared with Academic Board members. There was also a strategic workshop on Portfolio Size and Shape following on from the main meeting. Draft revised Size and Shape Principles were shared with Academic Board.
- AB.25.07.4.3.5 The Chair of the University Ethics and Integrity Committee (UEIC) reported that, on the meeting of 20 May 2025, there were discussions on the emerging AI risk register, the continued re-writing of the Research Misconduct procedure (Academic Board was assured that the revised procedure will be ready by the autumn, with an interim procedure in place until then), the endorsement of the UEIC Annual Assurance Report, and the approval of the sub-committee assurance reports.

AB.25.07.4.3.6 Members of Academic Board confirmed that they were assured with regards to the delegated academic activities of the thematic sub-committees.

AB.25.07.5 ITEMS FOR APPROVAL OR ENDORSEMENT

AB.25.07.5.1 Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers - action plan

Paper AB.25.07.09 was received.

AB.25.07.5.1.1 The DVC-Provost introduced the action/implementation plan for UWE's formal commitment to the Concordat. The Chair noted that career development will be a key pillar of the Research Excellence Framework (REF) assessment in 2029.

AB.25.07.5.1.2 It was noted that the plan had been developed and endorsed by RKEC during 2024/25, with EDI embedded throughout. RKEC will continue to monitor actions during 2025/26 and provide an assurance report to Academic Board [**Action:** Secretary/ Officer]. Formal thanks were extended to the CHSS Dean of Research and Enterprise.

AB.25.07.5.1.3 Academic Board approved external publication of the Concordat action plan.

AB.25.07.5.2 Student Protection Plan: Update

Paper AB.25.07.10 was received.

AB.25.07.5.2.1 The Academic Registrar invited members to consider and approve the annual update to this plan, which explains how the University will protect student interests in the event of a course, subject, campus or institution closure, along with an assessment of key threats to students' ability to complete their studies.

AB.25.07.5.2.2 It was noted that LTSEC has looked in detail at these updates, which primarily relate to the changing risk of closure due to UWE's financial position and the wider sector context. Another amendment related to the strengthening of statements regarding partner quality monitoring.

AB.25.07.5.2.3 The Chair noted, in this context, the costs of disaster recovery from cyber-attacks and the business continuity work needed to ensure that critical functions can continue to work in the event of a systems outage (also that systems can come back fully online with

the cost impact minimised). The Chair agreed to commission an evaluation of UWE's resilience from a student completion perspective in the event of a cyber-attack [**Action:** Chief of Staff/ Head of Risk, Resilience and Assurance].

AB.25.07.5.2.4 In the discussion, it was suggested that a risk matrix may present a more useful and objective measure of risk. However, it was noted that the Plan is a document for student consumption, so the threats need to be presented in an accessible manner.

AB.25.07.5.2.5 Academic Board approved the changes to the Student Protection Plan.

AB.25.07.5.3 Degree Outcomes Statement, 2023/24

Paper AB.25.07.11 was received.

AB.25.07.5.3.1 The Academic Registrar invited members to consider and endorse to Board of Governors the draft statement covering degree outcomes for the 2023/24 academic year, together with some additional analysis not part of the official statement.

AB.25.07.5.3.2 Members heard that the sector gap on 'Good Honours' remains below the market average, although the gap has narrowed. The Black/White awarding gap has also reduced but remains of concern.

AB.25.07.5.3.3 As requested previously by Academic Board, members also considered analysis of the gap between UK and international domiciled students and also a comparison of UWE's performance with that of the University Alliance as a subset of institutions with a similar size, subject portfolio and student profile to UWE. Members heard that this had revealed a significant gap in the outcomes of UK and non-EU international students. The data has already been scrutinised in detail by LTSEC, as a result of which the issue has been added to the student outcomes risk register (see AB.25.07.4.3.2 above). A working group has been established which will report back to Academic Board early in the 2025/26 academic year [**Action:** DVC Provost/ Deputy Registrar].

AB.25.07.5.3.4 In discussion, members sought clarity on the following:

- 1) The impact of the new degree classification algorithm implemented for the first time in 2024/25 and what impact this might have in future on good honours rates. It was noted, however, that the revised algorithm simply brings

UWE into line with the sector and that below market-average performance needs to be considered in terms of inputs (i.e. our assessment and marking design). The variability of different programmes as regards classifications also needs to be considered.

- 2) UWE's outlier results for first-class awards which were identified through additional analysis on UWE performance against University Alliance comparators. Further work on this misalignment to be considered by LTSEC during 2025/26 [**Action:** LTSEC Secretary/ Officer].

AB.25.07.5.3.5 It was further noted that degree outcomes of students studying at overseas partners were not included in dataset currently and that the UK/ international awarding gap identified concerned those studying in the UK only. However, schools can compare the performance of students on UWE- and partner-based versions of programmes via a dashboard available through the Performance and Analytics Portal.

AB.25.07.5.3.6 Academic Board endorsed the Statement to Board of Governors (via the People and Academic Assurance Committee).

AB.25.07.5.4 Self-Assessment Report and Quality Improvement Plan (apprenticeship provision)

Paper AB.25.07.12 was received.

AB.25.07.5.4.1 The Academic Registrar invited members to consider this year's updated apprenticeship Self-Assessment Report and Quality Improvement Plan.

AB.25.07.5.4.2 It was noted that multiple levels of scrutiny and endorsement have been provided by the Apprenticeship Board, UQSSC and LTSEC. It was also noted that Quality Improvement Plan will be monitored closely by the Apprenticeship Board.

AB.25.07.5.4.3 Academic Board approved the report.

AB.25.07.5.5 Committee Membership: proposed changes for 2025/26

Paper AB.25.07.18 was received.

AB.25.07.5.5.1 The Deputy Registrar invited members to approve changes to membership in committees within the academic governance structure following the recently completed phase of the University Transformation Programme, as well as other senior leadership role changes.

AB.25.07.5.5.2 It was noted that the Sustainability role at LTSEC should be re-named 'University Lead for Education for Sustainable Development' to avoid confusion with the Head of Sustainability in Estates [**Action:** LTSEC Secretary/ Officer].

AB.25.07.5.5.3 The Board approved the proposed membership changes.

AB.25.07.5.6 External Speaker Policy

Paper AB.25.07.13 was received.

AB.25.07.5.6.1 The Safeguarding Manager and Head of Stakeholder Engagement and Events introduced this updated policy, together with a discussion on process issues regarding how the policy should be implemented by UWE staff and associated communications.

AB.25.07.5.6.2 Members noted that the policy has been amended with some changes to its language, and the provision for stall requests submitted by staff or students to be assessed in line with the policy (to prevent radical, hazardous or inflammatory material).

AB.25.07.5.6.3 In the wide-ranging discussion on process and implementation, the interaction between the External Speaker Policy and the University's Freedom of Speech Policy emerged as an area of focus. Members agreed to delay approval until the External Speaker Policy has been reviewed alongside the Freedom of Speech policy to ensure alignment with, and a consistent approach towards, the recently released OfS guidance on the matter. Conversation to be set up between the Chief of Staff, General Counsel, the Chair of UEIC, and the Head of Stakeholder Engagement and Events [**Action:** Secretary/ Officer].

AB.25.07.5.6.4 It was noted in the discussion that the number of events subject to the External Speaker Policy is considerable, hence the need for good communication with staff about ESP requirements.

AB.25.07.5.6.5 The External Speaker Policy to be approved under Chair's action to ensure that publication takes place ahead of the start of the 2025/26 academic year [**Action:** Secretary/ Officer]. After

approval, clear communication about the policy to be issued to UWE staff [**Action:** Head of Stakeholder Engagement and Events].

AB.25.07.6 ITEMS FOR ASSURANCE

AB.25.07.6.1 Thematic Committee Annual Assurance Reports

Paper AB.25.07.14 was received.

AB.25.07.6.1.1 The Chair of LTSEC introduced that committee's Annual Assurance Report. Members were assured that LTSEC has fulfilled its remit by conducting its 2024/25 business effectively and in accordance with its Terms of Reference.

AB.25.07.6.1.2 The Chair of RKEC introduced that committee's Annual Assurance Report. Members were assured that RKEC has fulfilled its remit by conducting its 2024/25 business effectively and in accordance with its Terms of Reference.

AB.25.07.6.1.3 The Chair of SAPG introduced that committee's Annual Assurance Report. Members were assured that SAPG has fulfilled its remit by conducting its 2024/25 business effectively and in accordance with its Terms of Reference.

AB.25.07.6.1.4 The Chair of UEIC introduced that committee's Annual Assurance Report. Members were assured that UEIC has fulfilled its remit by conducting its 2024/25 business effectively and in accordance with its Terms of Reference.

AB.25.07.6.2 Academic Performance and Risk report (Academic Assurance)

Paper AB.25.07.15 was received.

AB.25.07.6.2.1 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.25.07.6.2.2 The Board was informed that there were no updates on the corporate scorecard regarding performance against academic KPI targets. It was noted that, ahead of National Student Survey, a set of good results had been received from the Course Survey and Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey.

AB.25.07.6.2.3 There were also no changes to the University's strategic risk

exposure. It was confirmed that the defunding of Level 7 apprenticeships, added as an additional student recruitment risk, is being tracked together with the actions to mitigate its impact. As mentioned above (AB.25.07.5.3.3), the awarding gap between UK and international students has been added to the student outcomes risk descriptor.

AB.25.07.6.3 Review of Chair’s actions taken on behalf of Academic Board in 2024-25

Paper AB.25.07.16 was received.

AB.25.07.6.3.1 The Board received assurance from the member charged with this auditing task, the Representative of Learning and Teaching Management in CATE, that all actions taken by the Chair outside the meeting were appropriate and in accordance with guidelines.

AB.25.07.6.3.2 Academic Board members were reminded that they had access to all papers approved by Chair’s action via the committee SharePoint site and that links were provided on each agenda.

AB.25.07.7 ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

AB.25.07.7.1 Policy Governance Framework: update

Paper AB.25.07.17 was received.

AB.25.07.7.1.1 The Academic Registrar introduced a minor amendment to the wording of the framework that cautioned against excessive use of the term *policy*, as this could have unintended regulatory implications. Policies should be reserved for formal, University-level documents, with Colleges and Schools encouraged to use terms such as *guidance* or *protocol*.

AB.25.07.7.1.2 Members were also assured that all policy renewals due in 2024/25 have been either approved or are currently being reviewed.

AB.25.07.7.2 Call for Nominations from Academic Board to fill the Professoriate Membership of the Honorary Degrees Committee

Paper AB.25.07.19 was received.

AB.25.07.7.2.1 The Secretary noted that nominations are now being sought from Academic Board to ensure that two new members from the whole professoriate are recruited to the Honorary Degrees Committee (for a three-year term starting in 2026). Nominations from Board

members will be reviewed by the Vice-Chancellor and the Head of Governance, with the recommendation for the two positions being brought to the October 2025 meeting of Academic Board for endorsement [**Action:** Secretary/ Officer].

AB.25.07.7.3

Chair's actions

Verbal update

AB.25.07.7.3.1

It was noted that no items were approved under Chair's action since the last meeting on 7 May 2025.

AB.25.07.8

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

AB.25.07.8.1

On behalf of all members of the Board, the Chair thanked Dr Heather Moyes, Academic Registrar and Secretary to Academic Board, who is leaving her role at UWE later this month, for her huge contribution to Academic Board and to the development of UWE Bristol more generally.

AB.25.07.9

ITEMS FOR COMMUNICATION

AB.25.07.9.1

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.25.07.10

DATE(S) OF NEXT MEETING(S)

AB.25.07.10.1

Next meeting dates for academic year 2024/25:

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

Next meeting dates for academic year 2025/26:

- 8 October 2025
- 10 December 2025
- 25 February 2026
- 13 May 2026
- 1 July 2026
- 8 July 2026 (joint session with the Board of Governors)