



Board of Governors

**ACADEMIC BOARD**

Minutes of the meeting held on 8 October 2025 in 2E027 on Frenchay Campus.

**Present:** Steven West (Chair), Tareem Asfour, Paul Bennett, Amanda Coffey, Olena Doran, Jennifer Dye, Corinne Funnell, Georgina Gough, Marc Griffiths, John Hancock, Khadiza Hossein, Matthew Jones, James Lee, Phil Legg, Elena Marco, Jo Midgley, Cathy Minett-Smith, Lyn Newton, Marcus Pugh, Darren Reynolds, Vlasios Sarantinos, Kos Siliafis, Muhammad Subhan, Nicola Temple, Mario Vafeas, Sarah Voss, Jenni Wilkinson, Yarden Woolf

**Apologies:** Yvonne Beach, Jason Briddon, Wendy Colvin, James Lee, Jenni Wilkinson, Asad Zarif Awan

**In attendance:** Jodie Anstee, Rachel Cowie, Chris Gledhill, Tracey John, Mike Ratcliffe (Secretary), Ian Stratton (item 7.2), David Young (Officer)

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

<b>AB.25.10.1</b>	<b>WELCOME AND APOLOGIES</b>
AB.25.10.1.1	The Chair welcomed members, especially those members new to their Academic Board roles in 2025/26. Apologies were recorded.
AB.25.10.1.2	The Chair noted that, although a lay member of the Board of Governors was not present at the current meeting, such a representative would attend future sessions.
AB.25.10.1.3	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 either in writing or verbally at the meeting.
<b>AB.25.10.2</b>	<b>WORKSHOP/DEEP-DIVE</b>

<b>AB.25.10.2.1</b>	<b>Academic governance and the role of Academic Board</b> <i>Paper AB.25.10.01 was received.</i>
AB.25.10.2.1.1	The Secretary presented a slide deck to refresh members on the importance of academic governance at UWE and Academic Board's role in providing advice and assurance to the Vice-Chancellor and Board of Governors as well as receiving assurance from the thematic committees (and associated sub-committees) within the academic governance structure.
AB.25.10.2.1.2	The nature of assurance, as well as its flow-through within the UWE committee system, was discussed. Members were advised on what kinds of questions they could ask to secure this assurance.
AB.25.10.2.1.3	Learnings from recent external reviews were broached, and members were invited to consider further points of training and development. The previously issued training matrix to be re-circulated to members after the meeting [ <b>Action:</b> Committee Officer].
AB.25.10.2.1.4	In response to questioning, it was confirmed that external reviews comprise a variety of different factors that combine to lend confidence to our direction and mission.
AB.25.10.2.1.5	The Chair concluded by stating that Academic Board is important to his role as Vice-Chancellor as it gives him confidence that UWE conducts its business in a safe and coherent way. Members of Academic Board are reflective, curious, critical and courageous participants. They should champion Academic Board and articulate its outcomes to the rest of the University.
<b>AB.25.10.3</b>	<b>ACADEMIC BOARD BUSINESS</b>
<b>AB.25.10.3.1</b>	<b>Academic Board terms of reference and membership 2025/26</b> <i>Paper AB.25.10.02 was received.</i>
AB.25.10.3.1.1	The Academic Board received and endorsed its updated Terms of Reference featuring an updated membership section previously approved in July 2025 following University Transformation Project and senior leadership role changes.
AB.25.10.3.1.2	Certain members have had their committee memberships re-

	allocated to maximise their impact within the academic governance system.
<b>AB.25.10.3.2</b>	<b>Academic governance by-election results</b> <i>Paper AB.25.10.03 was received.</i>
AB.25.10.3.2.1	The results of the recent academic governance by-election were noted. The Chair congratulated Prof. Mario Vafeas for being elected to the position of representative professor in CBL.
<b>AB.25.10.3.3</b>	<b>Academic Board business plan 2025/26</b> <i>Paper AB.25.10.04 was received.</i>
AB.25.10.3.3.1	The Secretary introduced the indicative business plan for the academic year, including possible deep-dive topics.
AB.25.10.3.3.2	In discussion, it was suggested that a deep dive on sustainability could be useful to illustrate how we as an institution can make a difference. Also suggested was a deep dive on AI, although preliminary mapping would need to be done on this first, as the impact of AI is becoming embedded across all our practices. UWE's governance has also changed to accommodate this challenge, including the establishment of the Data Executive Committee, the AI Education Group, and various AI activity in Schools. However, Academic Board could potentially look at gaps and opportunities to be more joined up in our approach.
AB.25.10.3.3.3	Members endorsed the 2025/26 plan.
<b>AB.25.10.3.4</b>	<b>Sub-committee terms of reference and business plans</b> <i>Paper AB.25.10.05 was received.</i>
AB.25.10.3.4.1	Members noted the terms of reference and the indicative business plans for the following committees that directly report to Academic Board.  <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Committee (LTSEC) - Business Plan only</li> <li>2. Strategic Academic Portfolio Group (SAPG)</li> <li>3. University Ethics and Integrity Committee (UEIC)</li> <li>4. Research and Knowledge Exchange (RKEC) - provisional only</li> </ol>
AB.25.10.3.4.2	The Chair reminded members that Academic Board has overall responsibility for the academic governance structure, and it is important that the Board is confident that the committees acting on its behalf have clear responsibilities, the right memberships,

<p>AB.25.10.3.4.3</p> <p>AB.25.10.3.4.4</p> <p>AB.25.10.3.4.5</p> <p>AB.25.10.3.4.6</p> <p>AB.25.10.3.4.7</p>	<p>and conduct appropriate business to be effective. Specifically on business plans, members of Academic Board were asked to consider whether the priorities are in line with the University's strategy.</p> <p>The Chair of LTSEC noted that further work needs to be done on membership, so the Terms of Reference has yet to be endorsed to Academic Board. However, in regards to the Business Plan, the indicative rhythm of the year was reviewed and endorsed. The Chair noted that some of the work of this (and other committees) emanate from external sources, including work triggered by OfS reviews and investigations.</p> <p>The Chair of SAPG noted the Terms of Reference remain largely the same, except for the inclusion of two new advisory groups that will provide insight into the Group.</p> <p>The Chair of UEIC noted only minor proposed amendments to the Terms of Reference, including an updated membership section and some re-wording to reflect the Committee's relationship with RKEC.</p> <p>The Chair of RKEC noted the provisionally updated Terms of Reference and Business Plan, both of which will be officially endorsed once the Committee meets later in October.</p> <p>Members approved all endorsed Terms of Reference, were assured that the priorities were appropriate and approved the business plans. The LTSEC Terms of Reference and the RKEC Terms of Reference and Business Plan will come to Academic Board for approval in December [<b>Action:</b> Committee Officer].</p>
<p><b>AB.25.10.4</b></p>	<p><b>MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING</b></p>
<p><b>AB.25.10.4.1</b></p>	<p><b>Previous minutes</b> <i>Paper AB.25.10.06 was received.</i></p>
<p>AB.25.10.4.1.1</p>	<p>Members approved the minutes of the meeting held on 3 July 2024.</p>
<p><b>AB.25.10.4.2</b></p>	<p><b>Action sheet and matters arising</b> <i>Paper AB.25.10.07 was received.</i></p>
	<p>The following updates were noted on the action sheet:</p>

<p>AB.25.10.4.2.1</p>	<p><i>AB.25.07.5.1.2 - Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers action plan: RKEC will continue to monitor actions during 2025/26 and provide an assurance report to Academic Board.</i></p> <p>UPDATE: Ahead of the Annual Report due in the autumn of 2026, a short interim report to be prepared for PAAC in November 2025 to assure Board of Governors that the action plan is now published as we committed to, the key actions are being progressed, and what to expect in the 2026 annual report. This interim report to be reported to Academic Board via RKEC. Action in progress.</p>
<p>AB.25.10.4.2.2</p>	<p><i>AB.25.07.5.2.3 - Student Protection Plan: The Chair commissioned an evaluation of UWE's resilience from a student completion perspective in the event of a cyber-attack.</i></p> <p>UPDATE: Work is underway on business continuity planning for the transition of the student record system to Banner; this work will feed into consideration of resilience regarding completion.</p>
<p>AB.25.10.4.2.3</p>	<p><i>AB.25.07.5.3.3 - Degree Outcomes Statement, 2023/24: A significant gap in the outcomes of UK and non-EU international students has been reported. A working group has been established which will report back to Academic Board in the 2025/26 academic year.</i></p> <p>UPDATE: The Deputy Registrar reported that a colleague has been seconded to report on this attainment gap. They will take a holistic view encompassing the impact of external policy and legislative changes.</p>
<p>AB.25.10.4.2.4</p>	<p><i>AB.25.07.5.6.3 - External Speaker Policy: 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.</i></p> <p>UPDATE: Discussion ongoing on replacing ESP with a framework/process for visitors and events that covers expectations at all levels. The focus needs to be on the guidance and process for this, with consideration for the wider H&amp;S elements of events. It will dovetail into Students' Union business.</p>
<p><b>AB.25.10.4.3</b></p>	<p><b>*Chair's actions</b> <i>Paper AB.25.10.08 was received.</i></p>

AB.25.10.4.3.1	<p>Members noted the following items approved under Chair's action since the last meeting:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Revision of 2025/26 Academic Calendar</li> <li>2. Updates to PGR sections of the Academic Regulations</li> <li>3. Changes to previously approved Apprenticeship Board membership</li> </ol>
<b>AB.25.10.5</b>	<b>STANDING AGENDA ITEMS</b>
<b>AB.25.10.5.1</b>	<p><b>Vice-Chancellor's report</b>  <i>Paper AB.25.10.09 was received.</i></p>
<p>AB.25.10.5.1.1</p> <p>AB.25.10.5.1.2</p> <p>AB.25.10.5.1.3</p>	<p>Members noted the VC's report for information.</p> <p>The October report covered Strategic Risks, UWE Bristol being one of the top climbers in this year's Guardian league table Guardian and Times League Table Performance, Bristol Old Vic Theatre School ceasing recruitment to UG degree programmes from September 2025, Higher Education Policy and Sector Developments, and Board of Governors business.</p> <p>The following comment was noted in discussion:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The study mentioned in section 4b of the report, showing how much first-year students need for a minimum socially acceptable standard of living, does not account for those different types of students who are unable to work, and which UWE has many.</li> </ol>
<b>AB.25.10.5.2</b>	<p><b>The Students' Union report</b>  <i>Paper AB.25.10.10 was received.</i></p>
<p>AB.25.10.5.2.1</p> <p>AB.25.10.5.2.2</p>	<p>The VP Education introduced the report on behalf of the President, noting the following: positive NSS results on Student Voice and Satisfaction, the increase in student representation (111 student reps, 18 Lead School Reps, both up from last year), the large attendance at the Frenchay freshers' fair (11,000 students), and the running of the inaugural PGR welcome fair.</p> <p>The following comments were made by members:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. It would be useful for the Colleges to have a conversation with the SU on how to support students enhancing their</li> </ol>

	<p>research experience (e.g. help with bursaries, access to conference money).</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Feedback on the PGR fair was highly positive.</li> <li>3. Collaborative work is being done on monitoring the quality of feedback given to students (including surveys and a working group) with the aim of creating a consistent standard.</li> </ol>
<b>AB.25.10.5.3</b>	<p><b>Thematic sub-committee business reports</b>  <i>Papers AB.25.10.11-13 were received.</i></p>
AB.25.10.5.3.1	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.25.10.5.3.2	The Chair of LTSEC noted that, on the meeting on the 17 September 2025, members endorsed the Business Plan, held a deep dive on NSS analysis and received assurance on progress of actions arising from the survey, endorsed the Casework annual report to the present meeting, discussed the Disabled Students Commitment, monitored GOS and careers data, updated the strategic risks under its remit, and received assurance on UQSSC activity.
AB.25.10.5.3.3	The Chair of SAPG noted that, on the meeting on the 22 September 2025, members endorsed the Terms of Reference and Business Plan, received portfolio reports from the Heads of College, discussed College articulations of the refreshed Size and Shape Principles, endorsed recommendations from the Collaborative Provision Review, approved Terms of Reference for the RPSEAG, and endorsed the Programme Closures and Approvals 2023/24 document (appendix to current item – for note). The Chair praised the committee’s work on refreshing the portfolio.
AB.25.10.5.3.4	The Chair of UEIC noted that, on the meeting of 3 September 2025, members endorsed the Terms of Reference and the Business Plan, received a welcome presentation from the new PVC Research and Knowledge Exchange, received an update on the revised Research Misconduct Procedure, endorsed the Freedom of Speech Annual Report and revisions to the Policy to the present meeting, received an update on AI governance at UWE, received

AB.25.10.5.3.5	<p>assurance on the effectiveness of the CRECs and sub-committees, and noted the establishment of the UEIC Task and Finish Group on Defence Industry Engagement (which will variously feed into SAPG, VCE and ultimately Board of Governors).</p> <p>Members of Academic Board were confirmed that they were assured with regards to the delegated academic activities of the thematic sub-committees.</p>
<b>AB.25.10.6</b>	<b>STRATEGY 2030 IMPLEMENTATION</b>
<b>AB.25.10.6.1</b>	<p><b>Strategic Implementation Report</b>  <i>Paper AB.25.10.14 was received.</i></p>
AB.25.10.6.1.1	Academic Board was invited to consider areas of focus for the next two years of Strategy 2030.
AB.25.10.6.1.2	The Chair informed members that the Board of Governors have asked for the Strategy to be analysed in two-year sections, the new one being 2026-27. The strategic plan takes a thematic approach to set out the Objectives and Key Results. It is reviewed by the Board of Governors and used by the Executive.
AB.25.10.6.1.3	Key areas to note since the last report in July include the beginning of Phase 2 of the Student Enquiry Management System, the release of the Anti-racism terminology module 2, and the addition of a new strategy-wide objective on Artificial Intelligence.
<b>AB.25.10.7</b>	<b>ITEMS FOR APPROVAL OR ENDORSEMENT</b>
<b>AB.25.10.7.1</b>	<p><b>Freedom of Speech Annual Report, 2024/25</b>  <i>Paper AB.25.10.15 was received.</i></p>
AB.25.10.7.1.1	The Chief of Staff and Clerk to the Board of Governors introduced the annual report on Freedom of Speech together with the revised policy.
AB.25.10.7.1.2	It was noted that UEIC on 3 September considered an annual assurance on Freedom of Speech. Active promotion of academic freedom and freedom of speech was encouraged, together with the need for training opportunities. Further resources being developed through AULP and Shakespeare Martineau may be

<p>AB.25.10.7.1.3</p> <p>AB.25.10.7.1.4</p>	<p>circulated to University staff. UEIC also scrutinised further revisions to the FoS Policy made in light of OfS guidance.</p> <p>The following additional comments were made:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) The University legal team will attend the AULP/ Shakespeare Martineau webinar in October. The aim of this webinar is to develop guidance rather than policy.</li> <li>2) Members were informed that helpful case studies, demonstrating where breaches of the law could occur, are offered by both Martineau and the OfS website.</li> <li>3) It will be necessary to act in concert with the SU on FoS matters.</li> </ol> <p>The annual report and revised policy were endorsed to Board of Governors.</p>
<p><b>AB.25.10.7.2</b></p>	<p><b>Casework Annual Report, 2024/25</b>  <i>Paper AB.25.10.16 was received.</i></p>
<p>AB.25.10.7.2.1</p> <p>AB.25.10.7.2.2</p> <p>AB.25.10.7.2.3</p> <p>AB.25.10.7.2.4</p>	<p>The Head of Student and Academic Policy Enhancement introduced a summary of the report previously endorsed by LTSEC after detailed consideration.</p> <p>Members were assured that, although case volumes - including academic appeals, complaints, professional suitability cases, conduct cases, and referrals to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA) - have all risen in 24/25, the functioning of Casework has stabilised over the past year even as our student community demonstrates increased awareness of their rights.</p> <p>It was noted that the increased frequency of cases creates more engagement, more learning experiences and expands accountability. We are reflecting on and reporting a more accurate picture as data capacities increase. The framework for decisions is the agreed procedures; the Casework team needs partners in finding pragmatic resolutions. Academic Board colleagues were asked to help find creative and innovative solutions to complex challenges, to help address underlying issues, ensuring there is confident and consistent delivery.</p> <p>Nominated readers made the following points:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Overall, a very informative report with a clear vision of the path ahead.</li> </ol>

AB.25.10.7.2.5	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2) Casework moving from processing to learning and prevention demonstrates a proactive approach.</li> <li>3) It would be instructive to see a breakdown of ethnicities/nationalities to identify any patterns or areas for concern, particularly considering the anti-racism lens.</li> <li>4) The oversight group to be established for complex/high-risk cases should be comprised of a diverse body of staff.</li> <li>5) What does a successful resolution look like?</li> <li>6) The length of some of the cases in the system is a problem. There are resource constraints being evidenced, particularly with time-unlimited conduct cases.</li> </ol> <p>The Chair thanked the Head of Student and Academic Policy Enhancement for a comprehensive report. It is evident that aspects arising from the report need to be taken out of the immediate scope of Academic Board and handled at Executive and audit level.</p>
<b>AB.25.10.7.3</b>	<p><b>Professoriate Membership of the Honorary Degrees Committee</b>  <i>Paper AB.25.10.17 was received.</i></p>
AB.25.10.7.3.1	<p>Following the endorsement of the Vice-Chancellor as Chair of the Honorary Degrees Committee, members of Academic Board were content to approve the candidacy of the following nominated members of the University Professoriate to fill two vacancies on the HDC:</p> <p>Prof. Shawn Sobers - nominated by Jacqueline Butler  Prof. Mario Vafeas - nominated by Andrew Simpson</p>
<b>AB.25.10.7.4</b>	<p><b>Academic Governance Annual Assurance Report, 2024/25</b>  <i>Paper AB.25.10.18 was received.</i></p>
AB.25.10.7.4.1	<p>The Secretary introduced the paper. Members were invited to consider the report for submission to the Board of Governors in line with its responsibilities under Condition E2 of registration with the OfS.</p>
AB.25.10.7.4.2	<p>Members were informed of the three main themes against which to gauge ourselves: 1) the constitution and operation of the Academic Board; 2) the effectiveness of wider academic</p>

<p>AB.25.10.7.4.3</p> <p>AB.25.10.7.4.4</p>	<p>governance arrangements; 3) student representation. It is proposed that all three are now green RAG-rated.</p> <p>It was reported that student representation has improved its rating due to marked improvements in student voice survey results and significant efforts made to strengthen representation arrangements. Regarding effectiveness, discussion took place on actions resulting from the Academic Board member survey, particularly the use of nominated readers and summary papers.</p> <p>The report was endorsed by Academic Board for onward submission to the Board of Governors.</p>
<p><b>AB.25.10.7.5</b></p>	<p><b>Request for approval of amended variant to UWE Bristol Academic Regulations</b>  <i>Paper AB.25.10.19 was received.</i></p>
<p>AB.25.10.7.5.1</p>	<p>Members were content to approve a variant regulation for MSci and BSc (Hons) Nursing Programmes.</p>
<p><b>AB.25.10.8</b></p>	<p><b>ITEMS FOR ASSURANCE</b></p>
<p><b>AB.25.10.8.1</b></p>	<p><b>Academic Performance and Risk report (Academic Assurance)</b>  <i>Paper AB.25.10.20 was received.</i></p>
<p>AB.25.10.8.1.1</p> <p>AB.25.10.8.1.2</p>	<p>The DVC-Provost introduced a high-level 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.</p> <p>Regarding the corporate scorecard, Board members were informed that there have been two data drops (NSS, GOS market data) since the last report. Regarding changes to the University's risk exposure, members were informed that Research Governance tactical risk is now designated a moderate risk, reduced from the previous level of high.</p>
<p><b>AB.25.10.9</b></p>	<p><b>ITEMS FOR INFORMATION</b></p>

<b>AB.25.10.9.1</b>	<b>Policy Governance Framework: status of policies and review schedule</b> <i>Paper AB.25.10.21 was received.</i>
AB.25.10.9.1.1	The Secretary introduced the report that lists those policies for which Academic Board has responsibility and those delegated to thematic committees.
AB.25.10.9.1.2	The Board was invited to note the policies due for review during 2025/26.
<b>AB.25.10.9.2</b>	<b>2024/25 Annual Summary of Apprenticeship Variant Regulations</b> <i>Paper AB.25.10.22 was received.</i>
AB.25.10.9.2.1	Members noted the variants to UWE Bristol's Academic Regulations relating to apprenticeship EPAs approved by the Deputy Registrar during 2024/25.
<b>AB.25.10.10</b>	<b>ANY OTHER BUSINESS</b>
	None to report.
<b>AB.25.10.11</b>	<b>DATE(S) OF NEXT MEETING(S)</b>
AB.25.10.11.1	Next meeting dates for academic year 2025/26: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 10 December 2025</li> <li>• 25 February 2026</li> <li>• 13 May 2026</li> <li>• 1 July 2026</li> <li>• 8 July 2026 (joint session with the Board of Governors)</li> </ul>