



## ACADEMIC BOARD

Minutes of the Academic Board held on Wednesday 03 March, 2021. The meeting was held using Microsoft Teams.

**Present:** Paul Bennett, Martin Boddy, Tod Burton, Sally Clark, Katie Jenkins, Candy McCabe, Amanda Coffey, Olena Doran, Sonja Dragojlovic-Oliveira, Marc Griffiths, Anil Kashyap, Helen King, Vanique Kruger, James Lee, Mandy Lee, Candy McCabe, Ray McDowell, Jo Midgley, Christopher Moore, Augusta Chidinma Nnajiolor, Jane Ojiako, Paul Olomolaiye, Carinna Parraman, Jackie Rogers, Jeanette Sakel, Jamie Stevens, Deborah Sturge, Sarah Todd, Steven West (Chair), Neil Willey.

**In attendance:** Jodie Anstee, Rachel Cowie, Chris Gledhill, Katie Jenkins, Heather Moyes (Secretary), Richard Strange, Amanda Oliver (Deputy Secretary),

**Apologies:** Jason Briddon, Peter Clegg, Fidel Meraz, James Murphy, Nicholas Ryder, Patricia Voaden

**Observers:** Kalpna Woolf

### AB 21.03.1 WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

AB 21.03.1.1 The Chair welcomed everyone to the March meeting of Academic Board.

AB 21.03.1.2 He welcomed James Lee, Acting Executive Dean ACE, as a new member and explained that James would replace Jane Roscoe. He also welcomed Kalpna Woolf as the Board of Governors observer.

AB 21.03.1.3 Apologies were noted as above. No declarations of interest were received.

### AB 21.03.2 MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

*Paper AB 21/03/01 and Paper AB 21/03/02 was received.*

AB 21.03.2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 09 December 2020 were **approved** as a true and accurate record of discussions.

#### AB 21.03.2.2 Action Sheet and Matters Arising

AB 21.03.2.2.1 Academic Board were advised that all actions arising from the previous meeting had been completed.

AB 21.03.2.2.2 The Chair reported that the Strategic Portfolio Group Terms of Reference were circulated as a late paper and had been approved by Chair's Action. He also noted that following a request at December's Academic Board meeting, feedback from the student focus groups on Block Zero had been circulated and had been discussed in detail at LTSEC.

AB 21.03.2.3

**Chair's Actions**

*Papers AB 21/03/03, AB 21/03/04, AB 21/03/05, AB 21/03/06, AB 21/03/07 and AB 21/03/13 were received*

AB 21.03.2.3.1

Members noted the following items had been approved by Chair's Action:

- Protocols on recording meetings and the MS Teams Chat Function, which were also issued to Academic Board on Monday 11 January 2021;
- A UWE variation to Academic Regulations and Procedures to enable compliance with PSRB requirements that come under the Engineering Council;
- Proposals for the School of Health and Social Wellbeing including the name change;
- Variations to UWE regulations for a new PGCE with QTS to be delivered online;
- The Academic Calendar;
- The Strategic Portfolio Group Terms of Reference

**AB 21.03.3\***

AB 21.03.3.1

**STANDING AGENDA ITEMS**

**Update from the Vice-Chancellor**

*Paper AB 21/03/08 was received*

AB 21.03.3.1.1

The Vice-Chancellor summarised the main updates in the paper and reported that:

- following the government's announcement on the easing of lockdown restrictions a series of communications were being prepared at University level and at local level, via programme leaders, for the return to campus. He highlighted that students on practical courses who needed to access specialist facilities and equipment would be able to return to in-person teaching and learning from Monday 8 March and that a provisional set of programmes that would return to blended learning from the 8 March were being confirmed with the Faculties. He emphasised that the increased return to campus would continue to be within the context of the University's current Covid-secure arrangements and there would be full access to campus from 21 June. He also announced that he would continue to communicate regularly with all staff through the VC Update, advising on any new or changed guidance.
- The vision set out in Strategy 2030 had guided the University's response to the pandemic. As part of Strategy 2030 implementation and planning, work was underway to establish three portfolios based on purpose, people and place, which included a capability mapping exercise designed to assess the University's readiness to deliver Strategy 2030. He highlighted the current Strategic Academic Risks and future responsibilities for monitoring these. He also noted that as part of item 4.1 'Strategy 2030 Implementation' members would have the opportunity to shape implementation of the University's Academic Strategy, reflecting on the experiences and learning from the pandemic.
- Recent statements from ministers had emphasised that HEIs must protect both the quality and quantity of tuition delivered and that the OfS has been directed to ensure this was the case. He reported that the OfS had asked all higher education providers to undertake a review of their ongoing compliance with consumer law during the first half of the spring term and to provide an assurance report to their governing body. He reported that the work currently in progress to shape the University's plans for Teaching Block 3 would feed in as part of the evidence base - demonstrating that quality and standards and student experience had remained high despite the challenges of the pandemic. He emphasised that Academic Board would have the opportunity to consider the outcome of the review ahead of presentation of an assurance statement to Board of Governors.

**ACTION: Secretary to Academic Board and Chair/Vice-Chancellor**

AB 20.12.3.2

**Update from UWE Student Representatives**

*Paper AB 21/03/09 was received*

AB 20.12.3.2.1

The President of The Students' Union advised members that despite the pandemic they had continued to work collaboratively with the University to ensure the student voice was heard. She reported that the recurring themes for students were tuition fees, rent and a safety net for students receiving their degree awards this academic year. She highlighted the positive outcomes that had resulted from joint working on rent rebates and the "safety net" for students.

AB 20.12.3.2.2

The Chair noted that while the University was fully supportive of the SU unfortunately the University was unable to force private landlords to provide rent rebates for students unable to return to Bristol.

AB 20.12.3.2.3

She also announced that the Leadership Race for the new SU Presidents had begun and that following the announcement of the candidates on Monday 22 Feb students now had the opportunity to cast their votes for the individuals they would like to lead The Students' Union and the UWE Bristol student community for the 2021/22 academic year. She reported that 19 students were standing for the five President positions.

**AB 21.03.4**

**ITEMS FOR APPROVAL OR ENDORSEMENT**

**AB 21.03.4.1**

**Strategy 2030 Implementation Workshop**

AB 21.03.4.1.1

Members participated in a workshop to discuss the following questions:

- What has our experience of Covid-19 taught us about our University?
- What have been our successes as we have adapted to support our students, staff and external stakeholders?
- What have been our greatest challenges as a University as we have adapted to these changed circumstances?
- What changes do you see in our academic risks going forward as a result of the pandemic?
- What might we need to rethink or accelerate in terms of our academic strategy and delivery going forward, to build on what we have learnt during the pandemic?

AB 21.03.4.1.2

The key points raised during the feedback focused on:

- The resilience of the University and its ability to innovate, adapt quickly to challenges and demonstrate agility in its operations;
- The positive impact on team, cross-department and cross-campus working and engagement of new ways of working;
- How important regular and effective communication had been in driving change and mobilising staff support and delivery;
- The University's success in connecting with and supporting external partners to support the national effort;
- The challenges presented by:
  - The need to rethink the culture around trust,
  - The lack of preparedness,
  - Missed corridor conversations,
  - IT access and digital capability of staff,

- Staff burnout,
- Not fully understanding students' preferences and adapting to these,
- Remodelling courses.

- AB 21.03.4.1.3 Members also identified the following emerging issues and issues for future consideration:
- The impact of remote and new ways of working (positive and negative) on staff and students;
  - Sustaining the effectiveness and efficiencies achieved, avoiding reverting to pre-Covid practice and retaining the right things;
  - The importance of identifying and reviewing hidden costs;
  - Ensuring the post graduate research experience was also a priority.

AB 21.03.4.2 **Research Excellence Framework Update**  
*Paper AB 21/03/10 was received*

- AB 21.03.4.2.1 The Head of Research Administration provided members with an update on progress made in preparing the University's final submission for the Research Excellence Framework 2021. He reported that UWE's final submission would comprise:

- 400 UWE staff (372.2 FTE) with significant responsibility for research, eligible to have outputs included in REF2021
- 934 research outputs (excluding any reductions due to cumulative individual circumstances)
- 41 impact case studies
- 14 environment statements, one for each of the 13 units of assessment and one institutional statement with an annex outlining the effects of Covid on UWE research.

- AB 21.03.4.2.2 He outlined the timetable for the final phase of the process, and for post-submission actions including an internal review to identify lessons learnt and future recommendations. He also informed members that following the submission, the assessment period for REF2021 was expected to last a year with the results published in April 2022 and the outcomes feeding into Research England's Quality-related research funding (QR) to universities from 2022/23 onwards.

- AB 21.03.4.2.3 In response to these comments, the PVC Research and Enterprise, advised members that future recommendations for internal process improvements would also need to reflect the certainty of REF changes.

- AB 21.03.4.2.4 Both the Chair and PVC Research and Enterprise thanked staff for their hard work and commented on the increased number of outputs eligible for inclusion in REF 2021 and the remarkable achievement in the context of the pandemic.

- AB 21.03.4.2.5 The Chair confirmed that the outcomes from REF 2021 would be reported to Academic Board.

**ACTION: Head of Research Administration/PVC Research and Enterprise**

AB 21.03.4.3 **Degree Outcomes, 2019/2020**  
*Paper AB 21/03/11 was received*

- AB 21.03.4.3.1 The DVC and Provost, as Chair of LTSEC, explained that the paper summarised a detailed report considered by LTSEC. It aimed to provide assurance to Academic Board on the impact of temporary changes to the academic regulations in response to the Covid-19 pandemic on degree outcomes for the 2019/20 academic year.

- AB 21.03.4.3.2 She highlighted the key findings in the report which illustrated that the impact of the removal of capping and the use of the 'Pre-Pandemic Average' on honours degree BAME and White students was not significant. She explained that:
- While more students undertook resits, a higher proportion passed them and the average module mark increased - with BAME students seeing an uplift between their first sit and final pass rate of 10 percentage points;
  - The good honours rate increased by 2% in 2019/2020 from 2018/2019 and remains lower amongst resitting students.
  - While the 'No Detriment' approach was likely to have increased good honours rates, but UWE's increase was still lower than the sector as a whole (a 4% increase).

AB 21.03.4.3.3 Academic Board agreed that the report provided assurance that academic standards were maintained for the 2019/20 graduating cohort.

AB 21.03.4.4 **Academic Board nominee to Board of Governors**

AB 21.03.4.4.1 Academic Board approved the appointment of Professor Marc Griffiths as the Academic Board nominee to Board of Governors, replacing Jane Roscoe.

**ACTION: Secretary to Academic Board**

AB 21.03.4.5 **Emerita Professor**  
*Paper AB 21/03/12 was received*

AB 21.03.4.5.1 Members approved the recommendation for Professor Selena Gray to be awarded the title of Emerita Professor.

**ACTION: Secretary to Academic Board**

**AB 21.03.5 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

AB 21.03.5.1 No items of any other business were received

**Dates of 2020/21 Meetings**  
**Wednesday 12 May 2021**  
**Wednesday 7 July 2021**