UWE Bristol | University of the West of England

ACADEMIC BOARD

Minutes of the meeting held on 5 July 2023.

Present:	Steven West (Chair), Yvonne Beach, Georgie Benford, Paul Bennett, Roshin Chummun, Amanda Coffey, Olena Doran, Gareth Edwards, John Griffiths, Sabiha Khan, James Lee (alternate for Marc Griffiths), Mandy Lee, James Macdonald, Kolawole Samuel Olure, Jackie Rogers, Jim Smith, Sadie Trent, Viljo Wilding
Apologies:	Jason Briddon, Sally Clark, Wendy Colvin, Hilary Drew, Kiana Eskandani, Marc Griffiths, Tarek Hasan, Katie Jenkins, Vanique Kruger, Elena Marco, Jo Midgley, Lyn Newton, Paul Olomolaiye, Richard Strange, Emma Weitkamp, Neil Willey
In attendance:	Jodie Anstee, Rachel Cowie, Carolyn Donoghue (Observer), Chris Gledhill, Heather Moyes (Secretary), Callum Reilly (Officer)

AB.23.07.1	**WELCOME AND APOLOGIES**
AB.23.07.1.1	Members were welcomed to the meeting and apologies were noted.
AB.23.07.1.2	No declarations of interest were received.
AB.23.07.2	**MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING**
AB.23.07.2.1	**Previous minutes** *Paper AB.23.07.01 was received.*
AB.23.07.2.1.1	Members approved the minutes of the meeting on 17 May 2023, subject to minor corrections to the list of attendees and apologies.
AB.23.07.2.2	***Action sheet and matters arising** *Paper AB.23.07.02 was received.*
AB.23.07.2.2.1	It was noted that all actions were either complete, not yet due or covered elsewhere on the agenda. It was confirmed that the new

SU Presidents team would have an opportunity to meet with VCE members on the Board.

AB.23.07.2.3	**Chair's actions** *Papers AB.23.07.03a–c were received.*
AB.23.07.2.3.1	Members noted the approval of Tony Pipe and Chris Melhuish as Emeritus Professors, the significant disruption regulations (relating to board quoracy) and the academic calendar for 2023/24.
AB.23.07.3	**STANDING AGENDA ITEMS**
AB.23.07.3.1	**Update from the Vice-Chancellor** *Paper AB.23.07.04 was received.*
AB.23.07.3.1.1	The report was noted for information. Members commented on the marketing and assessment boycott and thanked staff for their work to minimise the impact. It was noted that minimal numbers of final-year students had been affected to date and that there is reasonable confidence that continuing students can be progressed to the next year; there is nevertheless a need for clarity on how the University would support students affected.
AB.23.07.3.2	**Update from The Students' Union** *Paper AB.23.07.05 was received.*
AB.23.07.3.2.1	Members noted the report and welcomed the opportunity to work with the new SU Presidents.
AB.23.07.3.3	**Strategy 2030**
AB.23.07.3.3.1	*Research Strategy implementation* *Paper AB.23.07.06 was received.*
AB.23.07.3.3.1.1	The Deputy Vice-Chancellor introduced the paper, highlighting:

1. Recent progress on the University's research strategy, including a period of review following the departure of the Pro Vice-Chancellor Research and Enterprise.
2. A summary of findings from the Research Readiness Review and REF2021, and revised priority areas of focus for the next 18 months.
3. Updated KPIs for research strategy (funding and PGR numbers), with positive progress on funding for research and knowledge exchange.

AB.23.07.3.3.2   *REF 2028*
Paper AB.23.07.07 was received.

AB.23.07.3.3.2.1   The Deputy Vice-Chancellor introduced the paper, noting that UKRI has now published its initial high-level design of the next REF, which will focus more on institutional rather than individual outputs (with individual staff submissions no longer a component).

AB.23.07.3.3.2.2   Members heard that:

1. Under the new REF, the volume of outputs would be determined by HESA data on staff with "significant responsibility for research".
2. Impact case studies will no longer need to meet the minimum quality threshold of 2* for outputs. This means that while quality remains important, there is an opportunity to be more inclusive in the submission. The impact element now also includes public engagement, which is an area of strength for the University.
3. There will be more emphasis on the institutional narrative of research culture. The University's research strategy will therefore focus on further embedding this.
4. Submission is expected in late 2027, with the results published in the following year. The University will be conducting an institutional audit in 2024 in readiness; colleagues will be consulted on developing the scope of this audit, but it is likely to focus on identifying gaps and areas for investment.

AB.23.07.3.3.2.3   In discussion, members commented that the new REF would be an opportunity to consider the relationship between research and teaching across the University and its role within the wider region (particularly regarding knowledge exchange).

AB.23.07.3.3.3   *Learning and Teaching Strategy update*
Paper AB.23.07.17 was received.

AB.23.07.3.3.3.1   The Deputy Vice-Chancellor provided an update, highlighting:

1. The work of the Strategic Academic Portfolio Group (SAPG) and others in preparing a framework for evidence-based decisions on portfolio enhancement, including developing portfolio size and shape principles. This included a series of deep dives on the international market, PGT home provision, apprenticeships and FE partnerships.

2. The conclusion of the Subject Readiness Review (SRR), which was commissioned by SAPG to gather qualitative and quantitative evidence to enable Schools and Colleges to review their portfolios, including identifying areas for growth or contraction. Heads of Colleges are now working with Schools to consider how their portfolios could be reshaped.

3. An overall need to ensure high-performing programmes, with a positive programmatic student experience, but also good outcomes. The new risk-based annual quality enhancement cycle will be critical to this.

4. Further challenges to be addressed, including PGT programmes with small numbers of students, overly large numbers of module options and high assessment burdens. There is an additional need to remain alert to sector developments, including changes to foundation year funding.

It was noted that there were no formal recommendations arising from the SRR; it will be for Schools and Colleges to make informed, evidence-based decisions on how best to develop their portfolios within the framework established by the University.

It was additionally noted that it is not the expectation for entire subject areas to close, but Schools and Colleges should feel empowered to close programmes where the evidence supports this, and to use the capacity released to develop new areas of growth. In the case of any potential closures, the Student Protection Plan would be followed to ensure they are managed effectively without affecting students' studies.

In discussion, members commented on:

1. The assessment burden for students, including the perception that assessments are not always strongly embedded in learning and teaching.

2. Work needed to implement and embed the new quality cycle; work is currently underway to disseminate the cycle and develop guidance for programme teams. It was noted that the risk-based approach should reduce the burden on programme teams by ensuring reviews are proportionate.

3. The need to identify instances where students do not achieve good outcomes across multiple modules, which is currently a challenge due to ISIS being module based. A programmatic view is part of the specification for the new

system, which will be key to achieving a high-quality programmatic, rather than modular, experience.

4. The role of governance in ensuring portfolio decisions are holistic and joined up, with each College becoming a key assurance body for portfolio work carried out at School level.

5. The key role of the UWE Programmes workstream; the Deputy Registrar invited members to express their interest in being involved in this work.

6. The forthcoming 2025 Lifelong Learning Entitlement announced by the Government; it is expected that the launch will be targeted at FE providers but the University would need to consider the implications for partnerships.

AB.23.07.4	**ITEMS FOR APPROVAL/ENDORSEMENT**

AB.23.07.4.1   **Governance of research and ethics**
Paper AB.23.07.08 was received.

AB.23.07.4.1.1   The Clerk to the Board of Governors introduced the paper, noting that:

1. Academic Board previously approved draft terms of reference for the University Ethics and Integrity Committee (UEIC) in July 2022. The Committee will report to Academic Board and the Board of Governors, with its inaugural meeting scheduled for the autumn.

2. Since July 2022, work has been carried out in collaboration with the new committee's Chair and in consultation with the Colleges to develop a new ethics and research governance framework.

3. Alongside the framework, Academic Board is asked to approve revised terms of reference for both UEIC and the Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee (RKEC), which are aligned to it.

AB.23.07.4.1.2   Members were reminded that the substantive changes relate primarily to reporting lines and expanding the scope of ethics considerations to include corporate, as well as research, ethics. Most decisions on research ethics will continue at College or School level; it is expected that research ethics issues identified at this level will only exceptionally need escalation to the new committee.

AB.23.07.4.1.3   The Clerk to the Board of Governors confirmed that discussions on how the framework will be implemented for Colleges and Schools were still ongoing.
ACTION: To clarify and communicate any changes required for College-level ethics committees as part of the revised ethics framework (**Clerk to the Board of Governors**).

AB.23.07.4.1.4   Members approved the framework and terms of reference for both UEIC and RKEC.

AB.23.07.4.2   **Academic regulations: annual update**
Paper AB.23.07.09 was received.

AB.23.07.4.2.1   The Deputy Registrar introduced the paper, noting that:

1. New academic regulations for both 2022/23 and 2023/24 were approved by Academic Board in July 2022. After a period of review, further revisions are proposed for implementation in the 2023/24 academic year.
2. A substantive change relates to the current five-day late submission window for assessments, which was introduced in 2022/23. Following a review of its implementation, the proposed amendments (endorsed by LTSEC) would reduce this to a 48-hour window.
3. Widespread use of the five-day window among students was problematic for several reasons, including its impact on marking turnaround and further learning.
4. Use of the five-day window is symptomatic of broader issues, including students' time management and clustering of deadlines; these are expected to be addressed through other workstreams (including Success Coaches and UWE Programmes).
5. In the case of particularly difficult life events, there are already mitigation mechanisms in place, which will remain. These are to be approached on a case-by-case basis. Uncapped resits also remain in place.

AB.23.07.4.2.2   Members were asked to approve the amended regulations but disregarding the proposed amendments for compensation (Section 8); these were being reviewed in light of work in response to the marking and assessment boycott and would be presented for approval via Chair's action when ready.
ACTION: To seek approval for changes to compensation at levels 3 and 4 in time for 1 August 2023 (**Deputy Registrar**).

AB.23.07.4.2.3 In discussion, members considered staff and student representative views on the proposed changes to the late submission window, with the following points raised:

1. Data indicates that for many modules, between a half and two-thirds of submissions are received in the five-day window. This has led to knock-on effects for staff, including pressuring technical staff to provide academic support.
2. Views varied within the student body, with some students who do not use the submission window feeling penalised for adhering to the original deadline; some have felt pressured to support their peers who are submitting later and thus no longer have access to academic support.
3. Others, along with academic staff, were concerned that the window does not adequately prepare students for the workplace and that it would lead to lost learning, noting poor engagement with other studies during the five-day period. In many cases, the end of the five-day window was treated as a de facto deadline.
4. Conversely, some student members disagreed with the proposal to reduce the five-day late submission window, noting that others within the wider student body were in favour of retaining it.
5. Among those who use the late submission window, a variety of reasons were noted:
    a. Using the window as intended in response to difficult life events
    b. Using the additional time to refine their work further, having initially started the assessment before the deadline
    c. To spread out workloads strategically, sometimes not commencing assessments until the deadline has passed
    d. To negotiate clustering of deadlines across multiple modules, particularly where students are also working part-time.
6. It will be important to have a shared understanding among staff and students of what constitutes unreasonable clustering of deadlines.
7. There is a need to ensure that changes to the late submission regulations will work for partner providers, including those involved in apprenticeships.

AB.23.07.4.2.4 Based on the advice received, the amended academic regulations (including the proposed change from a 5-day to a 48-hour late

submission window) were approved. It was agreed that the messaging of the change would need to be considered carefully and noted that UWE Programmes would address the issues with assessment design, including the clustering of deadlines.

ACTION: To communicate the change to a 48-hour late submission window to students and staff (**Deputy Registrar**).

AB.23.07.4.3	**Children on University Premises guidance** *Paper AB.23.07.10 was received*.
AB.23.07.4.3.1	The Deputy Registrar introduced the paper, explaining that the guidance is designed to support the University's safeguarding responsibilities, particularly in relation to students bringing dependents onto campus. The guidance had already been endorsed by LTSEC and was presented to Academic Board for approval.
AB.23.07.4.3.2	It was noted that reference to The Students' Union at UWE would be removed as the SU is developing its own guidance.
AB.23.07.4.3.3	Members commented that:

1. The guidance should recognise that there are University activities that specifically encourage children onto campus (for example, Centre for Sports or open days); the guidance relates primarily to unsupervised children and this should therefore be communicated effectively.
2. Some of the guidance is contradictory or overly punitive. For example, the principle that staff will not be allowed to bring children onto campus is contradicted by guidance on conducting risk assessments for children coming onto campus.
3. Guidance on the appropriateness of children being brought into classrooms was still unclear (particularly where the subject being taught would be inappropriate for minors), as was the distinction between older and younger children. However, as guidance, it would be for teaching staff to use their discretion.

AB.23.07.4.3.4	It was agreed that further work to refine the messaging was needed prior to approval. **ACTION:** To work with the Safeguarding Manager to refine wording of the guidance and to seek Academic Board members as critical readers (**Deputy Registrar**).

AB.23.07.4.4 **Committee annual reports 2022/23**
Paper AB.23.07.11 was received.

AB.23.07.4.4.1 The Deputy Vice-Chancellor introduced the reports from LTSEC, SAPG and RKEC, noting that these are an opportunity for Academic Board to ascertain whether its sub-committees have operated within their terms of reference.

AB.23.07.4.4.2 Based on the evidence provided, members were assured that LTSEC, RKEC and SAPG have discharged their responsibilities effectively.

AB.23.07.5 **ITEMS FOR NOTE**

AB.23.07.5.1 **Variant regulations for apprenticeships 2022/23**
Paper AB.23.07.12 was received.

AB.23.07.5.1.1 The paper was noted for information.

AB.23.07.5.2 **Student casework annual report 2021/22**
Paper AB.23.07.13 was received.

AB.23.07.5.2.1 The paper was noted for information (notwithstanding a numerical discrepancy over the number of cases rejected).
ACTION: To request that a correction be made to the 2021/22 casework report (**Officer**).

AB.23.07.6 **SUMMARY REPORTS FROM SUB-COMMITTEES**

AB.23.07.6.1 **Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Committee**
Paper AB.23.07.14 was received.

AB.23.07.6.1.1 Members noted the summary report of the meeting on 19 April 2023.

AB.23.07.6.2 **Strategic Academic Portfolio Group**
Paper AB.23.07.15 was received.

AB.23.07.6.2.1 Members noted the summary report of the meeting on 20 June 2023.

AB.23.07.6.3 **Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee**
Paper AB.23.07.16 was received.

AB.23.07.6.3.1 Members noted the summary report of the meeting on 21 June 2023.

AB.23.07.7 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

AB.23.07.7.1   **Academic governance elections**

AB.23.07.7.1.1   The Chair provided a verbal update on the outcome of the summer 2023 academic governance elections, noting that:

1. Three of four vacancies have been successfully filled as follows:
    a. Representative from Teaching Staff (CBL) on Academic Board (following election)
    b. Representative of Teaching Staff (CBL) on LTSEC (following election)
    c. Representative from Professional Services on Academic Board (uncontested).
2. The remaining vacancy for Representative Professor (CBL) on Academic Board will be filled by a by-election to begin in the late summer.

AB.23.07.8   **DATES OF 2022/23 MEETINGS**

AB.23.07.8.1   • Tuesday 11 July 2023 (joint session with the Board of Governors)