



Board of Governors

## ACADEMIC BOARD

Minutes of the meeting held on 6 December 2023 in Room 2X242 on Frenchay Campus.

**Present:** Steve West (Chair), Yvonne Beach, Georgie Benford, Amanda Coffey, Wendy Colvin, Adele Drew-Hill, Kevin Golden, Georgina Gough, John Griffiths, John Hancock, Jessica Lamond, Jo Michell, Cathy Minett-Smith, Oluwadamilola Okeyoyin, Kolawole Samuel Olure, Kezia Paul (item 3.1 onwards), Jim Smith, Emma Weitkamp, Dan Wood

**Apologies:** Hilary Drew, Chris Gledhill, Marc Griffiths, Sabiha Khan, James Macdonald, Harrison Marcks, Elena Marco, Vlasios Sarantinos, Kos Siliafis, Nicola Temple

**In attendance:** Jodie Anstee, Rachel Cowie, Katie Jenkins, Heather Moyes (Secretary), Callum Reilly (Officer), Richard Strange

**Observers:** Margaret Simmons-Bird and Dave Tansley (Board of Governors)

### AB.23.12.1 WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

AB.23.12.1.1 Members were welcomed to the meeting and apologies were noted.

AB.23.12.1.2 No declarations of interest were received.

### AB.23.12.2 MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

#### AB.23.12.2.1 Previous minutes

*Paper AB.23.12.01 was received.*

AB.23.12.2.1 Members approved the minutes of the meeting held on 11 October 2023.

#### AB.23.12.2.2 Action sheet and matters arising

*Paper AB.23.12.02 was received.*

AB.23.12.2.2.1 It was agreed that actions relating to academic regulations (AB.22.07.4.1.3) and the Student Casework Annual Report for 2021/22 (AB.23.07.5.2.1) were completed and could now be closed.

AB.23.12.2.2.2 AB.23.10.3.1.2 and AB.23.10.5.2.2 (student representation on Academic Board)  
Although the action was noted as closed from the perspective of Academic Board, it was confirmed that members would receive an update on the outcome of issues raised and actioned through the Partnership Board (including work on Reimagining Student Representation).

**AB.23.12.2.3** **Chair's actions**  
*Paper AB.23.12.03 was received.*

AB.23.12.2.3.1 Members noted the approval of changes to terms of reference for committees within the academic governance structure under Chair's action. It was also noted that a partnership agreement had been signed to deliver online learning through Skilled, after consideration by the Strategic Academic Portfolio Group.

**AB.23.12.3** **STANDING AGENDA ITEMS**

**AB.23.12.3.1** **Vice-Chancellor's report**  
*Paper AB.23.12.04 was received.*

AB.23.12.3.1.1 Black History Month engagement  
Members heard that staff engagement in Black History Month activities had been disappointing and that there was a need for members to reflect and consider how to strengthen future engagement.

AB.23.12.3.1.2 In discussion, members commented on difficulties with increasing engagement, noting that Black History Month coincides with the start of the academic year. Low engagement was nevertheless noted as a wider issue affecting other initiatives such as Green Fortnight. It was suggested that staff should be engaged early in the development of programmes of activities for such initiatives, and that these could be included when planning the academic calendar.

AB.23.12.3.1.3 Black versus white awarding gap work  
Members heard that the Vice-Chancellor's Executive had commissioned a report to collate all workstreams intended to address the awarding gap. Addressing the gap remains a

University-level priority, drawing on good practice from the sector, and the Office for Students will have interest in the work (including through the University's Access and Participation Plan). Progress would be monitored through Academic Board and its committees.

### **AB.23.12.3.2**

#### **Update from The Student's Union**

*Paper AB.23.12.05 was received.*

#### AB.23.12.3.2.1

The Students' Union President introduced the paper, highlighting progress in recruiting student reps, issues raised by students through Speak Week and an issue for the Board regarding mental health and wellbeing support for students undergoing assessment offence processes.

#### AB.23.12.3.2.2

##### Assessment offences

In discussion, members heard that:

1. A significant number of potential assessment offences had been identified within the College of Business and Law (CBL), a majority of which had been upheld. Students undergoing the process were offered significant wellbeing support regardless of the outcome (and where relevant, support for students with visa concerns).
2. Decisions on assessment offences were not determined by a sole individual but involved multiple staff. The process remains essential for maintaining rigorous academic standards.
3. Lessons learned from recent cases in CBL would be shared across the University as part of efforts to minimise future assessment offences and to improve support for students undergoing the process. Considerations include assessment design, communications supporting good academic conduct and ensuring students are aware of assessment offence referrals affecting them.

**ACTION:** To present actions taken in response to recent assessment offences within CBL to Academic Board (**College Dean of Learning and Teaching (CBL)**).

#### AB.23.12.3.2.3

##### Speak Week

It was noted that Academic Board was not best placed to address the issues raised by Speak Week; a joint UWE-SU task and finish group would therefore be convened to address them and report back to Academic Board.

**ACTION:** UWE Bristol/SU task and finish group to report back to Academic Board on action to address issues raised through Speak Week (**Chair, SU President**).

AB.23.12.3.2.4

Students with outstanding financial debt to the University

A separate issue was raised regarding a small number of students with significant outstanding fees due who had been removed from access to Blackboard (as part of sanctions under the Tuition Fee Policy). It was noted that, in relevant cases, retrospective mitigation would be undertaken for any students who were unable to submit assessments due in the sanction period.

**AB.23.12.4**

**ITEMS FOR APPROVAL OR ENDORSEMENT**

**AB.23.12.4.1**

**Annual quality report 2022/23**

*Paper AB.23.12.06 was received.*

AB.23.12.4.1.1

The Secretary introduced the paper, noting that:

1. The report provides assurance to the Board of Governors that quality and standards are maintained appropriately and are consistent with the OfS B Conditions of Registration.
2. Confidence ratings are provided for each key theme; overall, most are rated as "green", with "amber" themes (for academic regulations, apprenticeships and collaborative provision) indicating that mitigating actions are in place and on track.
3. Student partnership and the student voice have been downgraded from green to amber because a range of student voice mechanisms is in place but are not yet being used optimally. This is being addressed through an 18-month Reimagining Student Representation project overseen by the UWE–SU Partnership Forum, based on four themes:
  - a. Setting expectations
  - b. Strengthening the evidence base
  - c. Representing effectively
  - d. Nurturing student leaders.
4. Graduate outcomes have dropped below the market for the first time in several years, but it is expected that this will be addressed through work already in place.
5. A small number of external examiners have raised concerns, pre-scrutiny of assessment briefs and other

mitigating actions are expected to address alignment with sector standards.

AB.23.12.4.1.2

In discussion, members commented that:

1. Due to recent changes in the Academic Regulations and the move away from examinations, there is a need to ensure that external examiners continue to have adequate opportunities to scrutinise academic standards in line with their responsibilities. It was noted that the new Enhancement Boards will have access to the relevant data to be shared with external examiners.

**ACTION:** To produce a brief outline of how the University ensures External Examiners are able to fulfil their responsibilities (**Academic Registrar**).

2. Evolving an institutional approach to AI would be supported by the recently agreed principles for using generative AI within learning, teaching and assessment; this would require engagement of all staff and students.
3. Work is underway to evaluate the impact of uncapped resits, including the related student communications campaign. The outcomes of this review will be shared once available.

**ACTION:** To provide an update on the impact of the student communications campaign to encourage students to engage appropriately with assessment opportunities (**Deputy Registrar**).

AB.23.12.4.1.3

Members agreed to endorse the report for submission to the Board of Governors.

**AB.23.12.4.2**

**Annual Statement on Research Integrity**

*Paper AB.23.12.07 was received.*

AB.23.12.4.2.1

The Research Governance Manager introduced the paper, noting that:

1. The statement is a mandatory requirement for receipt of funding from signatories. A confidential commentary accompanies the report to provide context on submission to the Board of Governors.
2. The University Ethics and Integrity Committee has formally approved a recommendation to make the Research Governance Record mandatory across all three Colleges; this will collate research governance documents including

research data management plans. Discussions are underway on incorporating the record within the Worktribe research management tool.

AB.23.12.4.2.2 In discussion, members commented on whether there is assurance that the Student Ethical Review of Research Record is being complied with. A recent audit shows that while the system itself is robust, there is not yet assurance of sufficient engagement. Dissertation supervisors are key to ensuring the process is followed and engagement would need to be tracked through the School Boards of Studies.

**ACTION:** To clarify communications on UG and PGT research supervisor obligations for the ethical review of student research (**Chair**).

AB.23.12.4.2.3 Members endorsed the statement for submission to the Board of Governors.

**AB.23.12.4.3 Postgraduate Degree Classification Algorithm: proposal for change**

*Paper AB.23.12.08 was received.*

AB.23.12.4.3.1 The Student Voice and Academic Policy Team Manager introduced the paper, noting that:

1. Following insight from the wider sector and the recent review of the undergraduate Degree Awarding Algorithm, it is proposed that the postgraduate algorithm be updated to include all 180 credits of a standard postgraduate taught programme (aligning with sector standards).
2. The proposal has already been endorsed by LTSEC and will ensure better alignment with the undergraduate algorithm, as well as maintaining academic quality and mitigating against grade inflation. Members were asked to approve the principle of the change.

AB.23.12.4.3.2 Members questioned whether the equality analysis had involved sufficient modelling of the impact of the change, particularly for awarding gaps. Members also raised the need to consider administrative systems requirements and whether the change took into account that impact of the transition from level 6 to level 7 study for some students.

**ACTION:** To present further modelling and equality analysis results to Academic Board for approval of the proposed change in principle; to also account for systems and administrative

capabilities (**Student Voice and Academic Policy Team Manager**).

**AB.23.12.4.4 University Validation Panel Terms of Reference**

*Paper AB.23.12.09 was received.*

AB.23.12.4.4.1 The Secretary introduced the revised terms of reference, highlighting that they have been updated to reflect that UVPs are now accountable to the University Quality and Standards Sub-Committee, rather than the Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Committee, and to reflect new College and School structures.

AB.23.12.4.4.2 Members commented on the need for more clarity on the quorum due to variable numbers within the membership; approval would be remitted to Chair's action once this is resolved.

**ACTION:** To clarify the quorum specified within the UVP terms of reference and to seek approval under Chair's action (**Secretary/Officer**).

**AB.23.12.4.5 Update to variant regulations**

*Paper AB.23.12.10 was received.*

AB.23.12.4.5.1 The Student Voice and Academic Policy Team Manager introduced the proposal to update an existing variant regulation for programmes accredited by Engineering Council PSRBs (to reflect changes to the regulations on compensation) and to extend this to other programmes as required. Members approved the proposed updates.

**AB.23.12.5 SUB-COMMITTEE REPORTING**

**AB.23.12.5.1 Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Committee**

*Paper AB.23.12.10 was received.*

AB.23.12.5.1.1 Members noted the report for information.

**AB.23.12.5.2 Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee**

*Paper AB.23.12.11 was received.*

AB.23.12.5.2.1 Members noted the report for information.

**AB.23.12.5.3 Strategic Academic Portfolio Group**

*Paper AB.23.12.12 was received.*

AB.23.12.5.3.1 Members noted the report for information.

**AB.23.12.5.4 University Ethics and Integrity Committee**

*Paper AB.23.12.13 was received.*

AB.23.12.5.4.1 Members noted the report for information.

**AB.23.12.6 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

**AB.23.12.6.1 Advance HE Academic Governance Benchmarking survey pilot**

AB.23.12.6.1.1 The Secretary gave a verbal update on the Advance HE academic governance benchmarking survey, which current and recent members of Academic Board had been asked to complete. Thanks were noted for colleagues' thoughtful responses; the final report would feed into the forthcoming external review of academic governance and would be shared with members in due course.

**AB.23.12.7 DATE(S) OF NEXT MEETING(S)**

AB.23.12.7.1 Next meeting dates for academic year 2023/24:

- 13 March 2024
- 15 May 2024
- 3 July 2024
- 9 July 2024 (joint strategic session with the Board of Governors)