

## ACADEMIC BOARD

## CONFIRMED

Minutes of the Academic Board held on Wednesday 09 December, 2020. The meeting was held using Microsoft Teams.

**Present:** Amanda Coffey, Olena Doran, Sonja Dragojlovic-Oliveira, Marc Griffiths, Anil Kashyap, Helen King, Vanique Kruger, Mandy Lee, Ray McDowell, Fidel Meraz, Jo Midgley, Christopher Moore, James Murphy, Augusta Chidinma Nnajofofor, Jane Ojiako, Paul Olomolaiye, Carinna Parraman, Jackie Rogers, Jane Roscoe, Jeanette Sakel, Jamie Stevens, Deborah Sturge, Sarah Todd, Steven West (Chair), Neil Willey.

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

**Apologies:** Paul Bennett, Martin Boddy, Tod Burton, Peter Clegg, Sally Clark, Katie Jenkins, Candy McCabe, Jo Midgley, Nicholas Ryder, Patricia Voaden

### AB 20.12.1 WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

AB 20.12.1 The Chair welcomed everyone to the last meeting of Academic Board in the calendar year. He acknowledged that it had been a challenging year and thank everyone for all their hard work.

AB 20.12.1.2 He welcomed Anil Kashyap as a new member of Academic Board and explained that Anil replaced Elena Marco as the Representative Head of Department for FET. He also thanked Elena for her contributions to Academic Board meetings.

AB 20.12.1.3 Apologies were noted as above.

AB 20.12.1.4 No declarations of interest were received.

### AB 20.12.2 MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

*Paper AB 20/12/01 and Paper AB 20/12/02 was received.*

AB 20.12.2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 14 October 2020 were **approved** as a true and accurate record of discussions.

#### AB 20.12.2.2 Action Sheet and Matters Arising

Academic Board noted the majority of actions arising from the previous meeting had been completed or were ongoing.

AB 20.12.2.3 The Chair congratulated colleagues who were identified to be part of REF Panels.

AB 20.12.2.4 He also noted his interest in the interface between Beacons and how they work with research centres.

### **Chair's Actions**

*Paper AB 20/12/03 was received*

- AB 20.12.2.3.1 Members noted that Chair's action was taken to approve the appointment of Leslie Bunt as Emeritus Professor in Music Therapy. The Chair thanked Leslie for his hard work.

### **AB 20.12.3\***

AB 20.12.3.1

#### **STANDING AGENDA ITEMS**

##### **Update from the Vice-Chancellor**

*Paper AB 20/12/04 was received*

- AB 20.12.3.1.1 The Vice-Chancellor highlighted key issues noted in the report, namely:
- Strategy 2030 Implementation Planning. He reported that all the commitments in Strategy 2030 had been mapped to a portfolio of work, focusing on purpose, people and place to ensure clear read back. He noted that the University was mindful of creating space to manage the ongoing impact of Covid-19 on operations and was prioritising a number of focused areas for implementation during 2020/21. He also recognised that in some areas, Covid-19 had led to an acceleration of work, for example in the digital learning space;
  - Covid-19 Matters. He explained that an enormous amount of work was underway to mitigate the impact of Covid-19, including asymptomatic lateral flow testing of students to enable them to travel home safely for Christmas in line with Government guidance. He noted that 5,000 tests had been conducted of which five were positive and this was broadly in line with the experience of other universities. He also highlighted that UWE had planned for a phased student return after Christmas and Government guidance was expected on the use of lateral flow testing to support the return to campus in the New Year;
  - IHRA Definition. The Chair reported that following the letter to all vice-chancellors from the Secretary of State for Education, requiring universities to adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's working definition of anti-Semitism the higher education sector had received further legal commentary that the letter did not constitute a legal obligation to adopt the definition. With this in mind, he reported that the Board of Governors had carefully considered the matter at their meeting on 18 November 2020, and, whilst they were clear that there was no place for discrimination of any kind at UWE Bristol, had chosen not to adopt the definition at this stage as the University's existing anti-discrimination policy framework and approach were appropriate to support this agenda;
  - Office for Students Matters (OfS). He noted that OfS were running consultations on several issues to which UWE would be responding. He highlighted the consultation on quality and standards and requested that comments should be sent to Heather Moyes who was writing the response.

AB 20.12.3.2

##### **\*Update from UWE Student Representatives**

*Paper AB 20/12/05 was received*

- AB 20.12.3.2.1 The President of The Students' Union advised members that since the report had been written focus groups had taken place exploring the feedback received about Block Zero. The VP Education reported that one of the findings related to having late night lectures.

AB 20.12.3.2.2

The Chair confirmed that the working day of the university is 9am-9pm and further work was needed to maximise room space on campus. It was noted the situation was under

review and lots of ideas about use of sign up lists and rotating campus activities to make better use of space had been received.

AB 20.12.3.2.3 Members requested a copy of the collated feedback.

**ACTION: SU President and VP Education**

**AB 20.12.4** **ITEMS FOR APPROVAL OR ENDORSEMENT**  
**AB 20.12.4.1** **Strategy 2030 Subject Readiness Programme**

*Paper AB 20/12/06 was received*

AB 20.12.4.1.1 The DVC and Provost and the Director for Student and Academic Services advised members that:

- Alongside Strategy 2030 discussions, proposals had been agreed to develop a work programme (Subject Readiness Review Programme, SRR) which critically reviews UWE's learning and teaching portfolio in the context of Strategy 2030;
- The SRR would run from January 2021-August 2023 and would build on and share excellence and ensure that subjects (and programme families) were future focussed, maximising the employability of UWE graduates and providing a personalised student journey to enable all students to reach their full potential;
- The SSR would be steered by a new University Strategic Portfolio Group (SPG), chaired by Deputy Vice-Chancellor, to be established through the merger of the University Curriculum Panel and Strategic Partnerships Sub-Committee, for which new Terms of Reference will be developed;
- Programme management will be via the Strategic Programmes Office;
- The work would become part of business as usual.

AB 20.12.4.1.2 Members raised concerns that the first phase of the programme commencing in February 2021 seemed challenging in the current context and were reassured that the workload for that phase wouldn't be that onerous and that the Programme as a whole would span a few years. However, it was agreed that the process needed to be agile enough to move things on at pace.

AB 20.12.4.1.3 Members recognised that the development of the SPG and the SSR programme was a positive step, however, it was also acknowledged that there would be staff anxiety about the proposal.

AB 20.12.4.1.3 Members agreed to the Chair signing off the Terms of Reference for the SPG.

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

**AB 20.12.4.2** **Academic Calendar, 2021/2022**

*Paper AB 20/12/07 was received*

AB 20.12.4.2.1 The Director of Student and Academic Services presented the Academic Calendar for 2021/2022 to members for review and approval.

AB 20.12.4.2.2 She reported that the calendar factored in:

- Revised A level results date, now delayed to the 24 August 2021;

- A reduced Block Zero/Induction period which is likely to be confirmed by the current review of Block Zero;
- Accommodation move-in dates moving to the start of the academic year, rather than requiring a specific week;
- The main teaching taking place across 11 weeks as per 2020-21 academic calendar;
- Postgraduate start dates reverting back to a September start;
- Predicted increases in students taking resits following the removal of capping of resit marks and different arrangements for managing personal circumstances;
- Bringing resit submission back in to July to prevent issues with students registering and graduates facing delays moving in to the job market.

AB 20.12.4.2.3 Members questioned whether there was an element of flexibility in revised calendars. For example, could it be shortened to reflect the school summer holidays, however, some colleagues were concerned it was too short and had been already shortened from 12- 11 weeks. It was clarified that the proposal was not to shorten the academic year further but to bring forward the start.

AB 20.12.4.2.4 The VP Education requested that a reading week is included for each Faculty.

AB 20.12.4.2.5 Other issues were also raised which were bespoke to individual Faculties. On this basis, it was agreed that Faculty Deans or Associated Deans would gather the views of colleagues in the Faculty and the Chair would convene a round table meeting to work through solutions each Dean could support. The Calendar would then be approved by Chair's action.

**ACTION: Faculty Deans/Associate Deans and Chair/Vice-Chancellor**

**AB 20.12.4.3 Policy Governance Framework**

*Paper AB 20/12/08 was received*

AB 20.12.4.3.1 The Secretary to Academic Board presented a proposal for a Policy Governance Framework to support Academic Board to exercise its responsibility for overseeing the initiation, development, approval, implementation and regular review of the suite of student and academic policies within its remit.

AB 20.12.4.3.2 She reported that to be effective these policies must be:

- clear, accessible, inclusive, informative, proportionate and compliant with relevant external legislative and regulatory requirements;
- be applied fairly and consistently and be understood widely by students, staff and other stakeholders.

AB 20.12.4.3.3 She also reported that the proposed Framework has been considered by both LTSEC and RKEC and that subject to approval of the Framework by Academic Board, LTSEC and RKEC would be tasked with overseeing its implementation for policy areas within their respective remits.

AB 20.12.4.3.4 It was confirmed that within the framework policies would be cross referenced and that the University had a protocol which outlined areas of policy where consultation with the trade unions would happen.

AB 20.12.4.3.5 Members requested that the Framework includes a pre-initiation stage which covers eligibility to introduce a new policy.

AB 20.12.4.3.6 Members also questioned whether there was a policy for online learning and what professional standards were expected from staff. It was noted that an online learning

approach was being developed by APD and a concrete set of parameters would be developed around UWE values linked to expectations.

- AB 20.12.4.3.7 Academic Board received and approved the Framework, subject to the changes noted above.

**ACTION: Secretary to Academic Board**

**AB 20.12.4.4 Annual Assurance Report on External Expertise Review for 2019/2020: summary**

*Paper AB 20/12/09 was received*

- AB 20.12.4.4.1 The DVC and Provost reported that, at its October, meeting LTSEC had considered the Annual Report on External Peer Review Processes 2019/20. She noted that while there was agreement that the report provided assurance that external expertise arrangements remained effective, there were variations in confidence in some of UWE partners' assessment processes and practices. She advised that this had already been identified in the previous year's report and highlighted that this posed a risk for the University and would be reported to Board of Governors to include in their risk profile. She also advised that during 2020/21, external expertise processes would be mapped against recently published guidance in UK Quality Code and there would be a continued focus on external examining at partner institutions.

- AB 20.12.4.4.2 Members confirmed they were content for LTSEC to oversee any concerns regarding partnership provision.

- AB 20.12.4.4.3 Members asked that consideration was given to the diversity of the examiner pool and in response it was highlighted that this conversation was happening across the sector, however, it was equally important to reflect on expectations of external examiner who were often juggling a wide range of jobs.

- AB 20.12.4.4.4 It was agreed that the report provided an appropriate level of assurance.

**ACTION: DVC and Provost and LTSEC**

**AB 20.12.5 ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**

**AB 20.12.5.1 Honorary Degrees Committee Report**

*Paper AB 20/12/10 was received*

- AB 20.12.5.1.1 Members noted the report.

**AB 20.12.5.1.2 Closure of the Bristol Centre for Economics and Finance**

*Paper AB 20/12/11 was received*

Members noted the report and that it had been received by the Faculty Executive.

**AB 20.10.6 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

- AB 20.10.6.1 No items of any other business were received

**Dates of 2020/21 Meetings**

**Wednesday 3 March 2021**

**Wednesday 12 May 2021**

**Wednesday 7 July 2021**