

APPROVED

DRAFT MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF ACADEMIC COUNCIL HELD ON WEDNESDAY 18 OCTOBER 2023 AT FYVIE HALL, 309 REGENT ST, MARYLEBONE, LONDON W1B 2HT

PRESENT:	Dr Peter Bonfield (Chair) Abdelhafid Benamraoui Dr Paul Elmer Dr Sal Jarvis (Deputy Chair) Anastasia Lydaki Caroline Lloyd Professor Luke Mason	Henryetta Simpson Jane Stonestreet Ben Stringer Dr Kalpana Surendranath Professor Alexandra Warwick Ian Wilmot Dr Leigh Wilson
IN ATTENDANCE:	Nandini Aggarwal Mark Baldwin Caroline Benyon (Minute 23.5) David Burt (Clerk) Mandy Chan (Secretary) Professor Sean Griffiths (Observer)	Frantzeska Kolyda (Observer) Elaine McMillan (Clerk to the Court) Olayinka Omoboye (Observer) Lin Phillips (Observer) Emma Standen
APOLOGIES:	Professor Dibyesh Anand (Acting Deputy Chair) Taruna Bangia Stephen Bunbury John Cappock Professor Alex Hughes (Deputy Chair)	Professor Janet Jones Professor Andrew Linn Professor Graham Meikle Dr Andy Pitchford
ABSENT:	Tasnim Jammal	

23.1 ANNOUNCEMENTS

23.1.1 The Chair welcomed all members and attendees.

23.1.2 The Chair welcomed the following new members and observers:

- Dr Paul Elmer – Acting Head of School, Westminster Business School
- Anastasia Lydaki – newly nominated postgraduate (PG) student representative
- Professor Alexandra Warwick – newly elected Head of School representative
- Professor Sean Griffiths – colleague governor¹
- Lin Phillips – independent governor¹
- Frantzeska Kolyda and Olayinka Omoboye – participants of Academic Council Shadowing Scheme

23.1.3 All members, attendees and observers introduced themselves.

23.1.4 Members noted apologies as detailed above.

23.1.5 The Chair informed members that due to the strength of applications, four colleagues were selected for Academic Council Shadowing Scheme 2023/24 instead of two. Members noted that the four participants will observe Council meetings in pairs and all will join a debriefing session after each meeting to share what they have learnt from the meeting.

¹ Lin Phillips and Sean Griffiths attended on behalf of the Court of Governors for the discussion of the annual quality assurance report and as observers for the rest of the meeting.

- 23.1.6 Members did not declare any conflicts of interest for the business on the agenda.
- 23.1.7 The Chair agreed to discuss the starred agenda item 16.0 Decisions Submitted to the Chair for Decision between Meetings (see Minute 23.11), which had been published late to members.
- 23.1.8 The Chair confirmed there were no requests to raise other matters not on the agenda.
- 23.1.9 Members did not submit any questions in advance of the meeting.

Chair's report

- 23.1.10 The Chair briefed members on sector issues and developments since the last meeting. This included:
- Potential higher education reforms that could produce risks and/or opportunities for the University and the sector:
 - Government's new Lifelong Learning Entitlement.
 - Change of government policy on international students' dependency visa.
 - Government announcement that from the 2025/26 academic year, the maximum fee and loan limit for some subject areas of foundation years will be lowered.
 - Potential policy changes relating to student numbers.
 - Financial challenges across the sector.
 - Potential for further industrial action.
- 23.1.11 The Chair confirmed that the University is financially healthy and has a strong reputation and announced that the University achieved a Silver award in the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) exercise.
- 23.1.12 A member explored the possibility of diversifying the student portfolio of the University to address potential risks. The Chair agreed that there are several opportunities that the University would consider; however, noted that some of which have their own challenges.
- 23.1.13 In respond to a member's query, the Chair informed members that the new dependency visa policy had not yet impacted on applications to the University's postgraduate courses from international students.
- 23.1.14 In response to a query on the possibility of expanding overseas partnerships, the Chair stated that any expansion would have to be done cautiously.

23.2 GOVERNANCE MATTER

Code of Conduct

- 23.2.1 The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (DVC) for Education suggested adding the Nolan Principles of Public Life as an appendix to the Code of Conduct (Document AC 231018A) so that members have a fuller understanding of all the principles.

23.2.1.1 ACTION Academic Council Secretary to add the Nolan Principles of Public Life as an appendix to the Code of Conduct.

23.2.2 **AGREED** Members reaffirmed their commitment to the Code of Conduct.

Terms of Reference and Membership

- 23.2.3 A member noted that the new DVC (Research and Knowledge Exchange) should be added to the membership.

23.2.4 **AGREED** Terms of reference and membership 2023/24 (Document AC 231018B) to be recommended to the Court for approval, subject to the addition of the new position of DVC (Research and Knowledge Exchange).

Schedule of Business 2023/24

23.2.5 **AGREED** Members confirmed that the activities on the schedule of business 2023/24 (Document 231018C) fulfil the responsibilities of Academic Council as outlined in the terms of reference.

Sub-committee Terms of Reference 2023/24 (Document AC 231018D)

23.2.6 **APPROVED** Updated terms of reference and membership for the Course Validation Standing Panel to be implemented with immediate effect.

23.2.7 **APPROVED** Updated terms of reference and membership for the Portfolio Planning Committee to be implemented with immediate effect.

23.2.8 **APPROVED** Updated terms of reference and membership for the Teaching Committee to be implemented with immediate effect.

23.3 STRATEGY BRIEFING SESSIONS AND ROADSHOWS FOR THE REFRESHED BEING WESTMINSTER

23.3.1 The Chair gave a presentation on the refreshed Being Westminster strategy, which he had presented to the University community in early October 2023 through a number of roadshow sessions. The presentation outlined the vision and mission of the University, the latest TEF Silver result, research performance and knowledge exchange, employability and related developments, as well as reputation and looking ahead to the future.

23.4 ANNUAL QUALITY AND STANDARDS REPORT 2022/23

23.4.1 The Chair reminded members that the two governors were in attendance to participate in the discussion of the report on behalf of the Court of Governors.

23.4.2 The Deputy Registrar (Quality and Standards) presented the report (Document AC 231018E), which is recommended by the Teaching Committee.

23.4.3 The Deputy Registrar informed members that the Office of Students republished the B Conditions of Registration in 2022 and that this annual quality report covers activities reported in the academic year 2022/23.

23.4.4 Members discussed three topics related to the report. Members' comments and suggestions included:

Support for courses/groups to better meet the numerical threshold requirement

- More engagement with students to improve retention rate.
- Assessment workload and staff-student ratio may be factors affecting retention.

Academic support for students' success

- More support for weaker students and those who feel lonely in their learning journey.
- More support for undergraduate (UG) students' transition from secondary education to higher education.
- More financial support to students, due to the high travelling cost in London and for part-time students working long hours.
- Enhance student experience and employability through the alumni network.
- Allow students' access to Westminster Weekly.
- Ensure that postgraduate (PG) receive comparative support to UG students.

- Students have a close relationship with Course Leaders and academic colleagues.
- Adequate resources and career support services for students.
- Personal Tutor system provides additional support to students.

Ensuring colleagues taking responsibility in the quality assurance process

- Course Leaders to commit to their role as key members in ensuring academic quality.
- Identify and support colleagues through the Professional Development Review and training programmes.

23.4.5 **AGREED** Members confirm to the Court of Governors that the assurance statements have been met.

23.5 ADMISSIONS POLICY AND APPLICANT COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

23.5.1 Caroline Benyon, Director of Global Recruitment, Admissions, Marketing and Communications (GRAMC) presented the updated policy (Document AC 231018F).

23.5.2 The Director (GRAMC) informed members that ownership of the policy had transferred from the Academic Registrar's Department to GRAMC.

23.5.3 The Director (GRAMC) informed members that the new Applicant Complaints Procedure was developed as the Student Complaints Procedure was not appropriate for these individuals.

23.5.4 A member raised the case of a student who faced difficulties in the application and enrolment to the University. The Director (GRAMC) confirmed that the updated Admissions Policy should help to settle such difficulties promptly in future.

23.5.5 Another member suggested more explicit emphasis on care leavers, those estranged from their parents and applicants with disabilities in the policy.

23.5.6 A member commended the introduction of a dedicated complaint procedure for applicants.

23.5.7 A member suggested adding a section to give more details on the release of final outcomes to the students in the Applicant Complaints Procedure.

23.5.8 The Chair thanked the Director (GRAMC) for joining the meeting to discuss the item.

23.5.9 **APPROVED** Admissions Policy and the Applicant Complaints Procedure to be implemented immediately, subject to the additions mentioned in Minutes 23.5.5 and 23.5.7.

23.6 ANNUAL STRATEGIC KPIS MONITORING REPORT

23.6.1 The Chair informed members that the annual strategic key performance indicators (KPIs) monitoring report relates to the refreshed Being Westminster 2023-29 and that several measures are in red or orange as we are at the beginning of the strategy period.

23.6.2 The Clerk to the Court of Governors and Head of University Governance explained that the report helps Council to fulfil its responsibility on monitoring academic effectiveness through reviewing the impact of the strategies and policies in place.

23.6.3 The DVC (Education) drew members attention to the triangulation of various measures, such as the relationship between teaching quality, academic support, retention and continuation and equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI).

23.6.4 Members commented on the academic support to students and made the following suggestions:

- Uplift student experience through more dedicated support sessions for assessment.

- Academic colleagues to put more effort into giving feedback to students.
- Training for academic colleagues to provide more quality feedback to students.
- Training for students to better understand and use the feedback provided.

23.6.5 A member pointed out that UWSU could help to collect student voices and feedback to help the University to collect more data to drive improvements.

23.7 TEACHING EXCELLENCE FRAMERWORK (TEF) 2023

23.7.1 The DVC (Education) thanked everyone who contributed to the TEF process, especially the UWSU for their independent submission.

23.7.2 The DVC (Education) briefed members on the TEF outcome (Document AC 231018H), including areas where the TEF Panel considered the University had achieved high quality and areas that need further improvement.

23.7.3 The Deputy Registrar (Quality and Standards) reminded members that feedback from the TEF Panel is confidential to the University; however, a feedback summary will soon be published by the Office of the Students.

23.7.4 The Deputy Registrar confirmed that the student numbers mentioned in the TEF Panel report cover the four academic years of the TEF period.

23.7.5 Members noted that the University will keep improving with ambition for a Gold award in the next TEF exercise.

23.8 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING AND MATTERS ARISING

23.8.1 **AGREED** Members confirmed the minutes of Academic Council meeting held on 21 June 2023 (Document AC 231018I) were an accurate record of the meeting.

23.8.2 Members received and noted an update on actions from the previous meeting (Document AC 231018J) and noted that both were completed.

23.9 MEETING EVALUATION

23.9.1 At the Chair's invitation the observers of the meeting noted:

- Strong student voice and brilliant contribution by the student.
- Everyone had a chance to speak, and all voices are heard at the meeting.
- All members took the discussion seriously and contributed to the meeting.
- Critical discussion which connected with frontline learning and teaching issues.
- Meeting papers helped to understand and connect the meeting items.
- Room is too big to hear everyone clearly.

23.10 STUDENT DISCIPLINARY PANEL MEMBERSHIP 2023/24

23.10.1 **APPROVED** Student Disciplinary Panel membership 2023/24 (Document AC 231108K) to be implemented from October 2023.

23.11 DECISIONS SUBMITTED TO THE CHAIR FOR DECISION BETWEEN MEETINGS

23.11.1 The Clerk to the Court of Governors summarised the decisions taken by the Chair between meetings (Document AC 231018Li).

23.11.2 In response to a concern from a member that the new statement on use of generative AI in the regulations did not provide sufficient guidance to students, the DVC (Education) explained that

the regulation will be supplemented with guidance for students and colleagues on the effective use of AI in learning and teaching.

23.11.3 **RATIFIED** Members confirmed the decision taken by the Chair in August 2023 to recommend the Policy on the safe use of generative AI to the University Executive Board for approval.

23.11.4 **RATIFIED** Members confirmed the decision taken by the Chair to adopt the exceptional defer/refer regulations from July 2023.

23.11.5 **RATIFIED** Members confirmed the decision taken by the Chair to approve a course specific regulation - with effect from 20 June 2023 - that Section 4.3 of the Framework for Undergraduate Courses (Section 17) of the Academic Regulations will not apply when marks are considered at the first attempt for the following Level 4 modules on the LLB (Hons) Law: Contract Law; Tort Law; Public Law; and Criminal Law.

23.11.6 **RATIFIED** Members confirmed the decision taken by the Chair to approve a course specific regulation – applicable to new students joining from the 2023/24 academic year - that requires students on the LLM/Postgraduate Diploma Legal Practice to take any resit necessary at the first opportunity.

23.11.7 **RATIFIED** Members confirmed the decision taken by the Chair to approve changes to Section 10 of the Academic Regulations 2023/24 – with effect from 15 August 2023 - relating to academic misconduct and the use of generative AI.

23.11.8 The Clerk to the Court of Governors presented the proposed course specific regulation for the BSc (Hons) Cyber Security and Forensics and BEng (Hons) Software Engineering (Document AC 231018Lii).

23.11.9 **APPROVED** Course specific regulation - that the maximum volume of condoned passes that may be awarded to a student at Level 4 for the BSc (Hons) Cyber Security and Forensics and BEng (Hons) Software Engineering with Electronics is 20 credits - to be implemented with immediate effect.

23.12 STUDENT CHARTER REWRITE

23.12.1 **APPROVED** Student Charter Rewrite to be implemented from 2024.

23.13 AN UPDATE TO THE CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK

23.13.1 **APPROVED** Members confirmed an update to the curriculum framework (Document AC 231018N), which had been considered by the Teaching Committee.

23.14 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

23.14.1 Members did not raise any other matters for discussion.

23.15 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

All meetings start at 1.45pm and take place onsite (rooms to be confirmed) with remote participation available (with prior notice) if members are unable to attend in person.

Wednesday 6 December 2023

Wednesday 21 February 2024

Wednesday 27 March 2024

Wednesday 26 June 2024