

APPROVED

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ACADEMIC COUNCIL HELD ON WEDNESDAY 10 APRIL 2019 IN ROOM CH1.14 CAVENDISH HOUSE, 101 NEW CAVENDISH STREET.

PRESENT:	Dr Peter Bonfield (Chair) Mr John Begg Ms Vedia Can (from 18.37) Mr John Cappock (up to 18.38) Dr Simon Courtenage Dr Paul Curley Professor Roland Dannreuther (Deputy Chair) Professor Alex Hughes (Deputy Chair) (up to 18.38)	Professor Malcolm Kirkup Professor Terry Lamb Professor Andrew Linn Ms Caroline Lloyd (up to 18.38) Professor Graham Meikle Ms Jane Stonestreet Professor Harry Thapar Dr Stefan van Dellen Dr Leigh Wilson
IN ATTENDANCE:	Mr Ibrahim Alzaid, UWSU (Observer) Mr Mark Baldwin (from 18.37) Mr David Burt (Clerk)	Mrs Elaine McMillan (Secretary) Mrs Emma Standen Ms Jamilla Torres, UWSU
APOLOGIES:	Mr Adrian Dutch Ms Lubaba Khalid	Miss Lareb Naseem Professor Jonathan Stockdale

18.35 ANNOUNCEMENTS

- 18.35.1 The Chair welcomed all members, observer Ibrahim Alzaid (UWSU President Elect) and UWSU Vice-President Jamilla Torres to the meeting. Jamilla Torres attended on behalf of Lareb Naseem.
- 18.35.2 Apologies were noted as detailed above.
- 18.35.3 No interests were declared.
- 18.35.4 The Chair confirmed there were no requests from members to discuss starred agenda items.
- 18.35.5 The Chair agreed a request to discuss a matter raised by a College representative under 'Any other business' (Minute 18.43).
- 18.35.6 Members did not raise any questions for the Chair.
- 18.35.7 **Chair's report:** The Chair gave members a brief update on recruitment performance.

18.36 RESEARCH STRATEGY

- 18.36.1 The Pro Vice-Chancellor (PVC) for Research introduced the proposed Strategy for Research Development and Support 2018-2023 (Document AC 190410A), which will be supplemented by operational plans and initiatives.
- 18.36.2 Members noted that there are close links between development of this Strategy and the University's Knowledge Exchange Strategy.

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- 18.36.3 Members welcomed the Strategy and held a broad discussion about the document, which builds on the University Strategy. Several members raised queries for the PVC (Research) and commented on aspects of the proposed Strategy.
- 18.36.4 The PVC (Research) informed members that having considered comments made at the last Council meeting, the Workload Allocation Model (WAM) Tariff Group has allocated 200 WAM hours to the research community leadership positions. In addition to the workload hours allocation there will be substantial support in place for these roles.
- 18.36.5 A member noted that transparent publication of WAM information is not consistent across the institution. The Heads of College present confirmed their support for transparent publication of such information. The Chair stated that Council will review progress on this issue at a future meeting.
- 18.36.6 Referencing the link to entry into the Research Excellence Framework (REF) exercise, a member requested assurance that research hours will be allocated fairly and through a clear system that does not disadvantage early career researchers. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (DVC) with responsibility for the REF confirmed that the University is developing the REF 2021 code of practice that will address such issues.
- 18.36.7 The PVC (Research) and the Chair reassured members that the University wishes to encourage all productive and useful research, centred around and linked to the four research communities in the first instance; however, the communities should not be viewed as exclusive.
- 18.36.8 Members discussed with the PVC (Research) matters relating to research funding in the context of uncertainty around Brexit.
- 18.36.9 Members welcomed the clear link in the Strategy between research and learning and teaching and that the Strategy recognises our community of PhD students and early stage career researchers.
- 18.36.10 **APPROVED** Strategy for research development and support 2018-23 to be adopted with immediate effect. The PVC (Research) will reflect on members' comments and queries and enhance the document as he deems appropriate.

18.37 EDUCATING FOR THE FUTURE

- 18.37.1 The Chair reiterated the importance of continuous improvement and highlighted to members that this is underpinned by the quality processes evidenced through the annual reports submitted to this meeting (Documents AC 190410G to M).

Student complaint casework – annual report

- 18.37.2 The Academic Registrar presented the annual report on student complaint casework (Document AC 190410B), which covers the calendar year 2018 and has been considered by the Teaching Committee.
- 18.37.3 Members supported the Teaching Committee's decision to accept the recommendation that the University reviews training sessions and provides further guidance to assist Investigating Officers in conducting a complaint investigation.
- 18.37.4 The Academic Registrar suggested that guidance is produced and published for review training sessions and provide further guidance to assist Investigating Officers in conducting a complaint investigation as many concerns, that may progress to a complaint if not dealt with, are addressed through informal discussion between colleagues and students.

Educating for the future: Enabling University of Westminster students from all backgrounds to fulfil their potential

- 18.37.5 The DVC (Education) presented a paper summarising research and findings about the key constraints and challenges our students face (Document AC 190410C), which were considered at the University Executive Board away day in March 2019. The paper builds on earlier discussions in preparation for the University's new Education Strategy.
- 18.37.6 The Chair welcomed to the meeting Mark Baldwin, Associate Head of College (Education and Students) for the College of Design, Creative and Digital Industries, who undertook some of the research presented in the paper and chairs the University's Timetabling Working Group.
- 18.37.7 Members welcomed the paper and confirmed that the findings are indicative of their experience of our students.
- 18.37.8 Members held a lengthy discussion about the findings with the DVC (Education) and the Associate Head of College. The discussion focused on differing engagement of groups of students with virtual and University-based learning activities and resources and the relationship between attendance, engagement and performance.
- 18.37.9 Mark Baldwin remained as an observer for the rest of the meeting.

18.38 STUDENT TERM DATES 2020-21

- 18.38.1 The Academic Registrar presented the proposed student term dates for the academic year 2020-21 (Document AC 190410D), which retain the additional week for the assessment, moderation and ratification process approved by Academic Council for 2019-20.
- 18.38.2 The Chair referred members to his earlier decision on the 2019-20 term dates and to the statements (reproduced in the paper) that were agreed by the academic staff union - UCU - at a meeting at Acas in January 2019.
- 18.38.3 A member requested assurance about line managers' decisions on requests for leave by academic colleagues between the coursework deadline for all refer and defer assessments and the date of publication of referral and deferral module results. The member also raised a query regarding any expectation of colleagues engaging with teaching-related activity outside the 38 weeks of teaching.
- 18.38.4 A member repeated the concern raised at the last meeting about unfair practices in the allocation of colleagues to support Clearing.
- 18.38.5 The Chair stated that if there is evidence of unfair practice this should be dealt with through the appropriate channels. The Chair re-stated that both points are outside the remit of Academic Council and reiterated the instruction given at the previous meeting, which is that colleagues should pursue matters of implementation of the academic staff contract with the PVC with responsibility for liaison with UCU.
- 18.38.6 A member expressed support for the proposed term dates, noting that the reasons for the decision on the 2019-20 term dates - to reduce colleague stress; impact positively on colleague wellbeing, and improve the quality of the assessment, moderation and ratification process - remain valid.
- 18.38.7 A member commented that the static spring break can impact on student attendance and education when the Easter weekend falls in term time. The DVC (Education) agreed to consider the issue.
- 18.38.8 Due to the lack of a clear consensus on the proposed term dates, the Chair called for a vote by a show of hands. Members voted to confirm the proposed term dates for 2020-21 with 14 members voting in favour and two voting against. Two members abstained.

18.38.9 **APPROVED** Student term dates 2020-21 to be implemented as presented. The term dates will be accompanied on the intranet by a note for academic colleagues on the outcome of the meeting at Acas in January 2019.

18.39 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING AND MATTERS ARISING

18.39.1 **AGREED** Minutes of the Academic Council meeting held on 6 February 2019 (Document AC 190410E) are an accurate record of the meeting.

18.39.2 Members received and noted an update on actions from previous meetings (Document AC 190410F).

18.39.3 **Timetabling policy (Action 18.29.7.1):** The Secretary sent a full summary of the discussion to the Chair of the Timetabling Working Group and the Director of Estates Planning and Services on 12 February 2019.

18.39.4 **Sub-committee terms of reference – Research Committee (Action 18.30.9.1):** The Chair, Research Committee has confirmed that the early-career researcher in the membership will be elected, subject to the identification of a practicable process to identify a voting constituency.

18.39.5 **Admissions policy (Action 18.20.3.1):** The Secretary sent members an update from the Director of Student and Academic Services on 18 February 2019.

18.40 ANNUAL REPORTS CONSIDERED BY THE TEACHING COMMITTEE

18.40.1 Members received the following annual reports, considered and agreed by the Teaching Committee:

- Academic appeals report 2017-18 (Document AC 190410G)
- Academic integrity report 2017-18 (Document AC 190410H)
- Annual monitoring stage 1 report (Document AC 190410I)¹
- External Examiners report (Document AC 190410J)
- Learning Futures impact report (Document AC 190410K)
- Litigation report (Document AC 190410L)
- Validation and review 2018 – overview report (Document AC 190410M)

18.41 SUB-COMMITTEE BUSINESS

18.41.1 Members received a report on the business conducted at meetings of the following sub-committees since the last meeting (Document 190410N):

- i. Course Validation Standing Panel – 20 February 2019
- ii. Curriculum Review and Innovation Committee – 13 March 2019
- iii. Research Committee – 28 January 2019
- iv. Student Experience Committee – 13 February 2019
- v. Teaching Committee – 27 February 2019

18.42 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

2018-19

Wednesday 26 June 2019

¹ The Academic Standards Manager confirmed outside the meeting that all annual monitoring reports that were outstanding at the time of the report submission have since been received.

2019-20

Wednesday 23 October 2019

Wednesday 4 December 2019

Wednesday 12 February 2020

Wednesday 1 April 2020

Wednesday 24 June 2020

All meetings take place from 1.45pm in Room CH1.14 Cavendish House, 101 New Cavendish Street.

18.43 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Access to University systems

- 18.43.1 A member queried whether the University could provide access to University systems to External Examiners to allow them to access information directly.
- 18.43.2 The Deputy Registrar (Quality and Standards) agreed to confirm whether this is possible and to inform the member of the outcome.