

**APPROVED**

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ACADEMIC COUNCIL HELD ON WEDNESDAY 17 OCTOBER 2018 IN ROOM CH1.14 CAVENDISH HOUSE, 101 NEW CAVENDISH STREET.**

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PRESENT:	Dr Peter Bonfield (Chair) Mr John Begg Ms Vedia Can Dr Simon Courtenage Dr Paul Curley Professor Roland Dannreuther (Deputy Chair) Mr Adrian Dutch Ms Lubaba Khalid (from minute 18.3.4)	Professor Malcolm Kirkup Professor Terry Lamb Ms Caroline Lloyd Professor Graham Meikle Miss Lareb Naseem Professor Jonathan Stockdale Ms Jane Stonestreet Dr Stefan van Dellen
IN ATTENDANCE:	Mr David Burt (Clerk) Mr David Cheeseman (from minute 18.2.6)	Mrs Elaine McMillan (Secretary)
APOLOGIES:	Mr John Cappock Professor Alex Hughes Professor Andrew Linn	Mrs Emma Standen Dr Leigh Wilson

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**18.1 ANNOUNCEMENTS**

- 18.1.1 The Chair welcomed all new members to the meeting.
- 18.1.2 The Chair provided an outline of the terms of reference and the sub-committee structure, and suggested that new members review the Standing orders as a guide to Council procedures.
- 18.1.3 The Chair informed members that the refreshed strategy provides the context for Academic Council's role in leading the academic endeavour of the University. He stated an expectation that Council members will act according to the core values, assured members that all views count, and informed members that the environment at Council meetings should be open, constructive and challenging.
- 18.1.4 Apologies were noted as detailed above.
- 18.1.5 No interests were declared.
- 18.1.6 The Chair confirmed that there were no requests from members to raise any items for discussion under 'Any other business' (Minute 18.13).
- 18.1.7 The Chair agreed to a request from members to discuss starred agenda item 2.7 Student disciplinary panel membership 2018-19 (Minute 18.4.9).
- 18.1.8 The Director, Global Recruitment and Admissions informed members that in response to a request to the Academic Council Secretary from a member of Council to discuss agenda item 2.5 Admissions policy, and having received useful comments from the member prior to the meeting, he is withdrawing the draft revised policy (Document AC 181017G) and will present the policy to the next meeting. A second member noted that he also intended to make a request to discuss the policy at the meeting.
- 18.1.8.1 **ACTION** Director, Global Recruitment and Admissions to discuss the comments with colleagues and re-submit the policy to the December meeting.

18.1.9 Members noted that agenda item 2.10 Procedure for managing allegations of research misconduct - staff (Document AC 181017L) has been withdrawn pending further discussion of the proposed change by the relevant department leads. If necessary, the paper will be presented to a future meeting of Academic Council.

18.1.10 Members did not raise any questions for the Chair.

18.1.11 The Chair provided members with an oral update on the outcomes from the Court of Governors meeting on 3 October 2018.

## **18.2 IMPROVING THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE**

18.2.1 The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education) presented his report on the approach taken by the University to support and enhance the student experience (Document AC 181017Bi), which was produced at the request of the Court.

18.2.2 In response to a member's query the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (DVC) confirmed that the report is presented for information and comment and that Council are not asked to endorse or approve any of the actions included.

18.2.3 The report explains how the University understands, measures and evaluates the student experience, and the action being taken to address the issues identified. In both cases, the student experience is divided into three elements - student satisfaction; student engagement; and student outcomes.

18.2.4 Members made an array of suggestions and contributions through discussion of the report.

18.2.5 A member queried whether target setting for course numbers takes into account the size of available rooms and noted in response that Heads of College will be asked to consider the physical limits of the estate during the planning process and will ensure these limits are not exceeded in the recruitment of students. Members also noted that the DVC has established a working group looking at space and timetabling issues.

18.2.6 In response to a member's query the Pro Vice-Chancellor with responsibility for people and culture confirmed that the staff unions will be part of a consultation on changes to the University's personal and professional development review system.

18.2.7 A member commented that the poor student satisfaction outcomes may be improved by better communication to students of the many examples of excellent teaching already taking place. He suggested that some research to better understand the student voice and perceptions may be beneficial. Members gave examples from other institutions about how communicating clearly to the student body about assessment and feedback improves perceptions and survey outcomes on this aspect of teaching and learning.

18.2.8 Members heard that the students' digital experience is a critical area for longer term change through course design and development.

18.2.9 Members discussed potential solutions such as responding to information in the free-text from module evaluations; more frequent measurements of student satisfaction; the network of course representatives and Course Leaders working together to make improvements; and focusing on a few specific issues and actions.

18.2.10 Members discussed communications to support students' understanding of the importance of the National Student Survey (NSS).

18.2.11 A member highlighted that there is no mention of the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey in the report and urged leaders to ensure that discussions around the student experience do not focus solely on undergraduate students and the NSS.

- 18.2.12 Members received and noted an initial overview of the lessons learned from participation in the Subject level Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) pilot during 2017-18 (Document AC 181017Bii).
- 18.2.13 The Chair confirmed that members will receive a full analytical report of the pilot when the Office for Students (OfS) publishes their evaluation of the subject level TEF pilot. He also confirmed that Council will play a key role in reviewing the outcomes of TEF assessments and should exercise its powers to improve practice.

### 18.3 ANNUAL ASSURANCE OF ACADEMIC QUALITY AND STANDARDS

- 18.3.1 The Academic Registrar presented the annual report and action plan relating to the continuous improvement of the student academic experience and student outcomes (Document AC 181017A), prior to submission to the Court.
- 18.3.2 Members noted that as this is a transitional year and the report therefore covers both the HEFCE assurance statements and the relevant OfS ongoing registration conditions. The report is supplemented by an evidence base comprising detailed reports on quality and standards received by Council during 2017-18.
- 18.3.3 Members noted that David Cheeseman, Deputy Chair to the Court, joins the meeting to participate in the discussion of this report and will report on the discussion to the Court when they meet in November 2018.
- 18.3.4 The Academic Registrar informed members that the OfS is yet to confirm the new arrangements for quality assessment, and, regardless of whether it is a requirement or not, it is good practice for the University to continue to report to the Court using such a report.
- 18.3.5 Members discussed whether the use of 'essay mills' by students is a particular issue for the University. A member also highlighted that there are examples of those running essay mills extorting money from students who have paid and engaged with their services by threatening to inform the University.
- 18.3.5.1 **ACTION Academic Registrar** to raise the query on use of essay mills with the Academic Standards team to identify what level of casework is as a result of this issue.
- 18.3.6 Members discussed the decrease in academic integrity casework and the explored whether the procedure for reporting plagiarism – particularly assembling evidence – could be more streamlined and efficient. A member noted that alternative assessments – such as vivas – can be introduced as an alternative to use of plagiarism detection software, which members recognise has limitations.
- 18.3.6.1 **ACTION Academic Registrar** to review the reporting process to identify whether there is potential to simplify the way in which evidence for plagiarism is collated. The Academic Registrar will engage with other departments if he identifies solutions that are outside his department's remit and will report to Council on the outcome of his review.
- 18.3.7 The Head of the Centre for Teaching Innovation (CTI) informed members that the Learning Futures annual impact report, due in February 2019, will not differ significantly from the 2017-18 report as students have not yet progressed fully through the Learning Futures curriculum.
- 18.3.7.1 **ACTION Head of CTI and Academic Registrar** to agree how best to present the report.
- 18.3.8 A member queried whether it is possible to synchronise reporting timelines (e.g. annual monitoring) to remove repetition of effort to identify relevant data.
- 18.3.8.1 **ACTION Head of CTI and Jane Stonestreet** to discuss the matter with the Deputy Registrar (Quality and Standards).

18.3.9 **AGREED** Academic Council confirm to the Court that the University has met the four HEFCE assurance statements, and the OfS on-going registration conditions B1 to B5.

18.3.10 Members commended the Academic Registrar and the Deputy Registrar (Quality and Standards) for an excellent report and for the quality of the data.

#### 18.4 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING AND MATTERS ARISING

18.4.1 **AGREED** Minutes of the Academic Council meeting held on 20 June 2018 (Document AC 181017C) are an accurate record of the meeting. The Academic Council Secretary confirmed that the draft minutes had been checked with the former membership.

18.4.2 Members received and noted an update on actions from previous meetings (Document AC 181017D).

18.4.3 **Teaching progression routes (Action 17.66.1.1):** Members noted that the teaching progression route to Principal Lecturer grade is now published with a direct link from the CTI website<sup>1</sup>.

18.4.4 **Student complaints procedure (Action 17.66.7.1):** Members noted that the Court received confirmation that Academic Council had considered their query, but decided not to make any change.

18.4.5 **Communication of the new academic model (Actions 17.68.6.1 and 17.68.6.2):** Members noted that further communications are planned to help people to understand the new structures and how they work.

18.4.6 **Academic Council terms of reference and membership (Action 17.69.6.1):** The Academic Council Secretary informed members that although the role of *Associate* Head of School does not exist, since the meeting she has become aware that there is role of *Assistant* Head of School.

**AGREED** Terms of reference and membership to be amended to state that the Head of School representative will be elected by the Heads of School and Assistant Heads of School.

18.4.6.1 **ACTION Academic Council Secretary** to submit the amended terms of reference to the Court for approval.

18.4.7 **Personal tutoring policy (Action 17.70.5.1):** Members noted that the amended policy is published on the University website<sup>2</sup>.

18.4.8 **Student disciplinary regulations (Minute 17.69.9):** Members considered a query from the Court that challenged whether the Head of College in which the student is studying in independent in the role of Chair of the Stage 2 Disciplinary Panel. Members supported the Court view that the Head of College would not be independent and proposed that a Head of College independent of the student's host College Chairs the panel.

**AGREED** Members delegate authority to the Chair to agree the amended regulations for submission to the Court.

18.4.8.1 **ACTION Academic Registrar** to re-submit amended regulations for approval, having first explored whether there are any unintended consequences of the proposed solution.

18.4.9 The UWSU President made a request that panel membership states that the nominee of the Students' Union must be present at the point a decision is made.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://cti.westminster.ac.uk/development-recognition/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.westminster.ac.uk/current-students/support-and-services/personal-tutors>

## APPROVED

18.4.10 **APPROVED** Student disciplinary panel membership for 2018-19 (Document AC 181017I) to be implemented as submitted.

### 18.5 **WIUT ANNUAL REPORT 2017-18**

18.5.1 Members received the annual report on the partnership with from the Westminster International University in Tashkent (WIUT) (Document AC 181017F).

### 18.6 **ADMISSIONS POLICY**

18.6.1 This paper (Document AC 181017G) is postponed to the December meeting (refer to Minute 18.1.8).

### 18.7 **COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE AND MEMBERSHIP**

18.7.1 **APPROVED** Curriculum Review and Innovation Committee terms of reference and membership (Document AC 181017H) to be amended, with immediate effect, to include the following changes:

- deletion of the responsibility for monitoring the performance of existing courses
- clarification that the Committee has responsibility for approving course closures (previously in conjunction with the Teaching Committee);
- update to the role title for the Chair (DVC Education)
- Business Information and Market Insight Manager (ex-officio) replaces a representative of Market Insight (nomination); and
- confirmation that the Business Partner is nominated by the Director of Finance.

### 18.8 **TERMS OF REFERENCE AND MEMBERSHIP 2018-19**

18.8.1 Members received and reconfirmed a copy of the Academic Council terms of reference and membership (Document AC 181017J), recommended by Council and approved by the Court (refer also to Minute 18.4.6 above).

### 18.9 **DRAFT ACADEMIC COUNCIL SCHEDULE OF BUSINESS 2017-18**

18.9.1 **AGREED** Members agreed the schedule of business for 2018-19 (Document AC 181017K).

### 18.10 **PROCEDURE FOR MANAGING ALLEGATIONS OF RESEARCH MISCONDUCT - STAFF**

18.10.1 This paper (Document AC 181017L) was withdrawn prior to the meeting (refer to Minute 18.1.9).

### 18.11 **SUB-COMMITTEE BUSINESS**

18.11.1 Members received a report on the business conducted at meetings of the following sub-committees since the last meeting (Document AC 181017M):

- i. Curriculum Review and Innovation Committee – 22 August 2018
- ii. Graduate School Board – 4 July 2018
- iii. Teaching Committee – 27 June and 11 September 2018

18.11.2 Members noted that the draft minutes from the meeting of the Research Committee held on 2 October 2018 were not received in time for inclusion in the report.

18.11.3 Members noted that the full minutes from sub-committee meetings are now stored in the Academic Council Reading Room.

**18.12 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

Wednesday 5 December 2018 2.00pm  
Wednesday 6 February 2019 2.00pm  
Wednesday 10 April 2019 2.00pm  
Wednesday 26 June 2019 2.00pm

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

**18.13 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

**Evaluation of the meeting**

18.13.1 The Chair invited College academic representative Jane Stonestreet to lead an informal evaluation of the meeting.

18.13.2 A member queried whether the evaluation could be conducted in private and the Chair confirmed that in addition to the informal evaluation at the end of each meeting there would be an annual evaluation of the performance of Academic Council that would provide opportunity for anonymised comments.

18.13.3 Members comments included:

- Very positive meeting – all have been able to address concerns and debated positively
- We have avoided the tendency to spin out from items and have stuck close to the agenda in our discussions
- This is one of the most useful meetings that we do. It is really interesting to be reminded about the students
- I liked that people were asked for opinions on various topics and that we draw out different opinions
- There is space to move a bit beyond the agenda and if the downside is that we overrun a bit then it is worth it. If we shut down a discussion completely we may lose something
- Good meeting – quality of input was right; gave good ideas to think about things at the right level; different views were very welcome; it was helpful that colleagues brought onto the agenda things that Council could deal with fully (and not just for operational sign off); it is difficult when members raise new issues – do we deal with things here or at the end?