UNIVERSITY OF FORWARD THINKING WESTMINSTER

APPROVED

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF ACADEMIC COUNCIL HELD ON WEDNESDAY 2 APRIL 2025 IN ROOM MG14, MARYLEBONE BUILDING

PRESENT:	Professor Peter Bonfield (Chair)	Frantzeska Kolyda
	Jessica Adebanjo	Professor Andrew Linn
	Divanshu Airan	Caroline Lloyd
	Professor Dibyesh Anand	Luke Mason
	David Burt (Clerk)	Jeanette Nicholas
	Professor Catherine Dormor	Dr Andy Pitchford
	Emma Elkington	Henryetta Simpson
	Amber Ella	Dr Margherita Sprio
	Dr Felicity Hardley	Isiah Robley
	Dr Sal Jarvis (Deputy Chair)	Ben Stringer
	Professor Christos Kalantaridis	Dr Natasha Whiteman
	Dr Paul Kendall	

IN ATTENDANCE:	Mandy Chan (Secretary)	Sarah Gaines (Observer)
	Mark Baldwin (up to Minute 24.25)	Elaine McMillan (Clerk to the Court)
	Kitty Brown (up to Minute 24.25)	Roshan Panditharathna (Observer)
	Linsey Cole (up to Minute 24.25)	Shehma Shabbir (Observer)

APOLOGIES:	Kaushika Patel	Ian Wilmot
	Dr Pinar Uysal Onganer	

24.23   ANNOUNCEMENTS

24.23.1   The Chair reminded all participants of the terms of reference of Academic Council and the expected behaviour at the meeting.

24.23.2   The Chair outlined the key discussion items for the meeting and expressed an expectation of a constructive discussion on the educational experience and performance of students, in preparation for the next Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) (Minute 24.24).

24.23.3   The Chair welcomed all members and attendees, with a particular welcome extended to the following new members and observers:

New members
- Emma Elkington – newly elected Head of School representative
- Isiah Robley – new postgraduate student representative
- Jessica Adebanjo – newly appointed Deputy Registrar (Quality and Standards), joining as a co-opted member

Observers
- Shehma Shabbir – independent governor
- Roshan Panditharathna and Sarah Gaines – Academic Council shadowing scheme participants

24.23.4   All members and attendees introduced themselves.

24.23.5   Members noted apologies as detailed above. The Chair explained that Luke Mason attended on behalf of the Head of College (Liberal Arts and Sciences).

24.23.6   Members did not declare any conflicts of interest for the business on the agenda.

24.23.7 The Chair agreed to one request to discuss starred agenda item 10 Refreshed Timetabling Policy (Minute 24.29). The Chair also briefed members on the procedure for requesting discussion of starred items.

24.23.8 The Chair confirmed there were no requests to raise other matters not on the agenda.

Chair's report

24.23.9 The Chair briefed members on sector and institutional issues and developments since the last meeting, including:

- The recent UUK (Universities UK) meeting.
- Financial and workforce challenges in the sector.
- His role leading a Government-commissioned independent review on flooding.
- The University of Westminster Students' Union (UWSU) election.

24.23.10 The Chair thanked members for agreeing to begin the meeting earlier.

24.23.11 The Chair also reported a high completion rate for students with disabilities learning support who are Dragons[1], compared to the completion rate of non-Dragons and that of a College.

24.24 EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE AND PERFORMANCE OF STUDENTS

24.24.1 Sal Jarvis - Deputy Vice-Chancellor (DVC) for Education, Andy Pitchford – Head of Centre for Education and Teaching Innovation, Linsey Cole – Director of Business Engagement, Mark Baldwin – Executive Director of Performance, Improvement and Innovation, and Kitty Brown – Director of Strategy, Planning and Performance jointly delivered a presentation on the preparation for the next TEF submission, aiming for a Gold rating.

24.24.2 The team outlined the Intent-Implementation-Impact approach, underpinned by five 'golden threads': authentic learning, embedded employability, belonging and engagement, student voice and partnership, and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals – highlighting the importance of data and evidence to demonstrate progress and impact.

24.24.3 Members took part in group discussions exploring three questions: *What are the biggest challenges/opportunities, Which aspects are of particular interest to you and Are there dimensions that we could consider differently.*

24.24.4 Each member was invited to contribute one idea on how the University could strengthen its path towards TEF Gold, which will feed into the work of the TEF Group. Key suggestions included:

- Bringing colleague and student voices in TEF preparations and discussions.
- Data to demonstrate progress and gain external recognitions.
- Drawing on external input, including employer engagement and the wider University research community.
- Balancing social capital and the cost of living through paid student opportunities.
- Enhancing authentic learning and student belonging.
- Ensuring 'basics' working everywhere.
- Improving student engagement.

24.24.5 A member encouraged members to use the Talent Bank and Student Ambassadors scheme for paid student opportunities.

24.24.6 The Chair emphasised the importance of embedding the golden threads across University work and stressed that Council will continue to monitor progress towards TEF Gold.

---

[1] Dragon's Active is UWSU's programme of social sport and activity.

24.25 **ANNUAL STRATEGIC KPIS MONITORING REPORT – MID-YEAR UPDATE (RELEVANT EXTRACTS)**

24.25.1 The DVC (Education), Andrew Linn – DVC for Research and Knowledge Exchange (RKE) and Dibyesh Anand – DVC for Global Engagement and Employability (GEE), presented relevant extracts from the mid-year update of the annual strategic key performance indicators (KPIs) monitoring report (Document AC 250402A).

24.25.2 Members noted that the University is currently reviewing its KPIs and the way performance data is presented to ensure they are fit for purpose and effectively demonstrate the University's progress and impact.

24.25.3 The DVC (Education) highlighted that 'academic support' and 'teaching quality' are priority areas as they remain below benchmark; no KPIs are set for 'degree classification' to avoid compromising academic standards; 'retention' and 'completion' data are unavailable due to dashboard discrepancies, and the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion KPIs are limited in tracking progress.

24.25.4 The DVC (RKE) noted RKE KPIs are under review with potential to include KPIs for research culture and impact; research income remains positive with increased grant applications, and new postgraduate research satisfaction data is expected after the survey relaunch on 16 April 2025.

24.25.5 A member noted the recent increase in overseas PhD applications across the sector.

24.25.6 Another member sought clarification on the international postgraduate satisfaction data and members noted that more work is needed to enhance satisfaction of different student groups.

24.25.7 The DVC (GEE) noted a shift in employability efforts from implementation to impact, with student engagement remaining as a key challenge. For global engagement, the DVC (GEE) emphasised the challenges in international student recruitment and the need to enhance international students' experience.

24.25.8 The Chair stressed a forward-looking approach to KPIs, informing solutions and improvement strategies in addition to performance assessment.

24.26 **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING AND MATTERS ARISING**

24.26.1 **AGREED** Members confirmed the minutes of Academic Council meeting held on 19 February 2025 (Document AC 250402B) were an accurate record of the meeting.

24.26.2 Members noted there are no outstanding actions or matters arising from previous meetings.

24.27 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

24.27.1 Members did not raise any other matters for discussion.

24.28 **MEETING EVALUATION**

24.28.1 The observers shared their feedback on the meeting:

- The TEF Gold discussion clarifies the University's educational priorities and challenges, particularly employability issues shared across generations.
- The proposal to enhance KPIs and data presentation, along with a forward-looking and action-oriented approach to KPIs, was welcomed.
- Small group discussions allowed for valuable in-depth dialogues.
- The DVCs' explanations of the KPI report contextualise the KPI data.

24.29   REFRESHED TIMETABLING POLICY

24.29.1   A member relayed some key concerns raised by colleagues regarding the proposed refreshed Timetabling Policy (Document AC 250402C): the double block arrangement for joint degree programmes in relation to the block system (paragraphs 9.3 and 9.4), lunch hours (paragraph 15.5) and travel across campuses (paragraph 15.11) mentioned in the Policy, and the maximum daily teaching hours of colleagues and students, which could particularly impact colleagues and students with access needs.

24.29.2   The DVC (Education) confirmed the all-day scheduling principle of the Policy and clarified that the maximum expected teaching time would be seven hours a day, including travel between campuses, with an additional one-hour lunch break. The DVC (Education) noted that the concerns raised primarily related to the practical implementation of the Policy.

24.29.3   The DVC (Education) acknowledged the need for flexibility in relation to joint degree programmes, which operate on a double block system, and agreed to revise the Policy wording to reflect this.

24.29.4   **APPROVED** The refreshed Timetabling Policy, with amendments to accommodate the flexibility needs of the joint degrees programmes, to take immediate effect.

24.29.5   The Chair commended the good work of the member in reflecting colleagues' concerns to Academic Council.

24.29.6   The DVC (Education) noted the student concerns on peak-hour travel costs, as reflected by UWSU to the Timetabling Project Board during the Policy review. The Chair also shared that the UWSU President is collaborating with peers from over 20 institutions through the London Students' Partnership to address the student travel cost issue with the Mayor of London.

24.30   COURSE SPECIFIC REGULATIONS

24.30.1   **APPROVED** The course specific regulation for LLB Law, LLB European Legal Studies, LLB Law and Criminal Justice, LLB Law and International Relations, and LLB Law and French to take effect from 2024/25 (Document AC 250402Di).

24.30.2   **APPROVED** The course specific regulation for Bachelor of Science (Honours) Artificial Intelligence to take effect from September 2026 (Document AC 250402Dii).

24.31   REPORTS CONSIDERED BY THE TEACHING COMMITTEE

24.31.1   Members noted the following reports and accepted the recommendations made by the Teaching Committee:

- Annual Student complaints report 2024 (Document AC 250402Ei)
- Annual litigation report 2024 (Document AC 250402Eii)
- Modification report 2023/24 (Document AC 250402Eiii)
- Continuous improvement outcomes 2023/24 (Document AC 250402Eiv)
- Validation and revalidation report 2024 (Document AC 250402Ev)

24.32   DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

All meetings start at 1.45pm and take place onsite (rooms to be confirmed).

Wednesday 25 June 2025
Wednesday 15 October 2025
Wednesday 3 December 2025
Wednesday 25 February 2026
Wednesday 15 April 2026
Wednesday 24 June 2026