

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ACADEMIC COUNCIL HELD ON WEDNESDAY 20 OCTOBER 2021 IN ROOM M416 MARYLEBONE ROAD AND VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

PRESENT:	Dr Peter Bonfield (Chair) Abdelhafid Benamraoui Stephen Bunbury Zahra Butt, UWSU Professor Alex Hughes (Deputy Chair) Savitha Jagannath Dr Sal Jarvis (Deputy Chair) Professor Janet Jones Professor Malcolm Kirkup Dr Nicholas Lambrou	Professor Andrew Linn Caroline Lloyd Professor Graham Meikle Olivia Otts Dr Andy Pitchford Jane Stonestreet Professor Harry Thapar Ian Wilmot Dr Leigh Wilson
IN ATTENDANCE:	Professor Lynne Berry (Observer) Sharan Bhambra (Notetaker, Minutes 21.4 and 21.5) David Burt (Clerk) Wayne Clark (Minute 21.4) Linsey Cole (Minute 21.5) Nicola Haines (Minute 21.5)	Ingrid Henstone (Notetaker, Minute 21.4) Jane Lamarque (Minutes) Elaine McMillan (Secretary) Kate O'Donnell (Notetaker, Minutes 21.4 and 21.5) Emma Standen
APOLOGIES:	John Cappock	Matthew Gooderson

21.1 ANNOUNCEMENTS

- 21.1.1 The Chair welcomed all members, attendees and observers.
- 21.1.2 Members noted apologies detailed above.
- 21.1.3 The Chair informed members that Ian Wilmot (Acting University Secretary and Chief Operating Officer) attended as a substitute for John Cappock and that Lynne Berry (independent governor and Chair of the Court of Governors Elect) attended on behalf of the Court of Governors for the discussion of the annual quality assurance report and as an observer for the rest of the meeting.
- 21.1.4 The Chair welcomed the new student and academic representatives and thanked the representatives who have left Academic Council for their contributions.
- 21.1.5 Members did not declare any interests in the business on the agenda.
- 21.1.6 The Chair reminded members that they should send any requests to discuss starred agenda items or to raise matters not on the agenda to the Academic Council Secretary at least 24 hours in advance of the meeting. The Chair reminded members of the importance of reading papers far enough in advance of the meeting to enable them to do make such requests in the right timeframe.
- 21.1.7 The Chair reminded members that members should indicate their approval (or otherwise) for starred items at least 24 hours in advance of the meeting to allow the time at meetings to be focused on matters where discussion is beneficial. The Chair informed members that as members had not responded to this request in advance of this meeting, three starred items requiring a decision would be considered at the relevant point in the agenda (Minutes 21.7 to 21.9).

21.1.8 Members did not submit any questions in advance of the meeting.

Chair's report

21.1.9 The Chair briefed members on the strategic context for the coming academic year, including the refresh of Being Westminster: Our Strategy 2018-23.

21.2 ACADEMIC COUNCIL GOVERNANCE

Code of Conduct

21.2.1 The Chair explained the principles of the Code of Conduct (Document AC 211020A).

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

Terms of reference and membership

21.2.3 **AGREED** Members confirmed adoption of the terms of reference approved by the Court in May 2021 (Document AC 211020B) without proposing any changes.

21.2.4 Members discussed gaps in the membership to inform the Chair's nominations for a Head of School or Assistant Head of School and a member of academic staff. Members highlighted the following priorities:

- Junior colleagues (including those who are not in a role that points towards career development)
- BME colleagues
- Course Leader¹
- Female colleagues
- Director of Learning, Teaching and Quality²

21.2.5 The Academic Council Secretary informed members of a concern raised by UCU, the academic staff union, that academic colleagues in the Centre for Education and Teaching Innovation are ineligible to stand or vote in elections for college academic representatives for Academic Council.

21.2.6 Members did not consider it appropriate to propose to the Court of Governors that Academic Council membership includes an additional elected representative from CETI. Members noted that the Head of CETI is an ex-officio member and can represent the views of CETI colleagues at Council.

21.2.7 **AGREED** Members will consider the Chair's nominees by correspondence so that they can participate from the meeting in December 2021.

21.2.7.1 ACTION Academic Council Secretary to send the Chair's nominees to members for approval.

Schedule of business

21.2.8 **AGREED** Members confirmed that the activities on the schedule of business 2021/22 (Document AC 211020B) fulfil the responsibilities of Academic Council as outlined in the terms of reference.

¹ Members noted that there are at least two Course Leaders in the current membership

² Members noted that there is a Director of Learning, Teaching and Quality in the current membership

Sub-committee terms of reference 2021/22 (Document AC 211020C)

- 21.2.9 **APPROVED** Updated terms of reference and membership for Course Validation Standing Panel to be implemented with immediate effect, subject to specification of who will nominate the college academic representatives.
- 21.2.9.1 **ACTION Deputy Registrar (Quality and Standards)** to submit corrected terms of reference to the next meeting.
- 21.2.10 **APPROVED** Updated terms of reference and membership for Portfolio Planning Committee to be implemented with immediate effect.
- 21.2.11 **APPROVED** Updated terms of reference and membership for Research and Knowledge Exchange Steering Committee to be implemented with immediate effect.
- 21.2.12 **APPROVED** Updated terms of reference and membership for Teaching Committee to be implemented with immediate effect.
- 21.3 QUALITY AND STANDARDS ASSURANCE REPORT 2020/21**
- 21.3.1 The Chair reminded members that independent governor Lynne Berry is in attendance to participate in the discussion of the report on behalf of the Court of Governors.
- 21.3.2 The Deputy Registrar (Quality and Standards) presented the report (Document AC 211020D), which is recommended by the Teaching Committee.
- 21.3.3 Members noted that the content of the report should also inform the later discussion about improving the student experience.
- 21.3.4 The Deputy Registrar updated members about Office for Students' consultations relating to quality and standards conditions.
- 21.3.5 The Deputy Registrar confirmed that the Assistant Registrar (Quality and Standards) will update the report to include data due for publication later this month prior to submission to the Court.
- 21.3.5.1 **ACTION Academic Council Secretary** to circulate the updated report to members.
- 21.3.6 A member welcomed the inclusion of external views, such as External Examiners and the external member of Teaching Committee.
- 21.3.7 A new member queried whether the report should include more detail about our student body and the impact on learning. The Deputy Registrar confirmed that the report is a summary reflection of the previous year and that the information requested is covered in the more detailed reports considered by Academic Council through the year (which are available in the Evidence Base).
- 21.3.8 Members discussed low uptake of the opportunities through the internal Prestige programme to achieve the Senior Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy and noted that School operational plans for 2021/22 include references to increasing teaching qualifications.
- 21.3.9 **AGREED** Members confirmed that the assurance statements have been met.
- 21.3.9.1 **ACTION** Independent governor and the Academic Council Chair to confirm the view of Council to the Court.

21.4 IMPROVING THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE

- 21.4.1 The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (DVC) for Education and the DVC (Employability and Global Engagement) introduced a discussion session on plans to improve our student experience through our education and employability endeavours.
- 21.4.2 The KPI Enhancement Manager presented a summary of the University's results in the Graduate Outcomes survey of graduates from 2018/19 (Document AC 211020Ei) and the National Student Survey and Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey 2021 (Document AC 211020Eii).
- 21.4.3 Members split into five breakout groups to discuss two questions:
- How should we best support colleagues to achieve high quality, active and authentic learning and teaching?
 - Employability related learning must be fully embedded at course level if it is to make a difference to graduate outcomes. How can that best be achieved?
- 21.4.4 Members returned to the main meeting and a spokesperson from each breakout group summarised the key points of their discussion.
- 21.4.5 The Deputy Vice-Chancellors thanked members for their contributions, which will inform ongoing work.

21.5 STEPPING UP IN RESEARCH AND KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE

- 21.5.1 The Pro Vice-Chancellor (PVC) for Research and the PVC (Knowledge Exchange) introduced a discussion session on the mid-term review of the research and knowledge exchange objectives in Being Westminster: Our Strategy 2018-23 and objectives for the refreshed Strategy. The presentation included video case studies from three researchers.
- 21.5.2 Members split into five breakout groups to discuss two questions:
- In your roles and your areas, looking ahead:
- How can you step up for Research and Knowledge Exchange (RKE) at Westminster?
 - How can RKE step up for you?
- 21.5.3 Members returned to the main meeting and the Chair confirmed that key points from the breakout discussions would be circulated³.
- 21.5.4 The Pro Vice-Chancellors thanked members for their contributions, which will inform ongoing strategic discussions.

21.6 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING AND MATTERS ARISING

- 21.6.1 **AGREED** Minutes of the Academic Council meeting held on 23 June 2021 (Document AC 211020F) are an accurate record of the meeting.
- 21.6.2 Members received and noted an update on actions from previous meetings (Document AC 211020G).

³ There was not enough time for groups to feedback to the main meeting because of the late start, which was due to technical issues

- 21.6.3 **Matters arising – commissioning brief (Minute 20.57.5)** Members noted that, having considered members comments, the Chair approved the commissioning brief under delegated authority from Academic Council.

21.7 DECISION TAKEN BY THE CHAIR BETWEEN MEETINGS

- 21.7.1 **RATIFIED** Members supported the decision taken by Chair's action between meetings to approve an exemption to Section 4 Recognition of Prior Learning Regulations 4.15 and 4.18 for a specified group of students for this year only (Document AC 211020H).

21.8 ACADEMIC REGULATIONS 2021/22

- 21.8.1 Members noted the actions the University took to respond to the Covid-19 pandemic during the 2021/22 academic year and their impact on student outcomes (Document AC 211020I).
- 21.8.2 Members considered recommendations from the Teaching Committee (Document AC 211020I) to retain some amended regulations for 2021/22.
- 21.8.3 **APPROVED** The following amended regulations will be retained for the 2021/22 academic year:
- a) Students on taught courses can submit mitigating circumstances for COVID-19 related reasons and will not require documentary evidence. COVID-19 related reasons will not count towards the two claims allowed per academic year.
 - b) Revised regulations relating to work placements and study abroad modules.
 - c) Postgraduate students who commenced their studies in January 2021 and who complete up to and including September 2022, will be classified using the best 160 credits.
 - d) Part time postgraduate students who started their studies in September 2019, January 2020 and September 2020 and who complete up to and including September 2022, will be classified using the best 160 credits.
- 21.8.4 **AGREED** Members supported the recommendation from the Teaching Committee that for undergraduate students, the regulatory modifications relating to progression and award calculation will not be retained for 2021/22.

21.9 STUDENT DISCIPLINARY PANEL MEMBERSHIP 2021/22

- 21.9.1 **APPROVED** Student Disciplinary Panel membership to be implemented as proposed for 2021/22 (Document AC 211020J) subject to the updates to postholders reported orally by the Deputy Registrar (Quality and Standards).

- 21.9.1.1 **ACTION** Deputy Registrar (Quality and Standards) to submit an updated list for the record.

21.10 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- 21.10.1 Members did not raise any other matters for discussion.

21.11 APPRENTICESHIP SELF-ASSESSMENT REPORT AND QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN

- 21.11.1 Members received the report and action plan (Document AC 211020K).

21.12 OFFICE FOR STUDENTS CONSULTATION ON QUALITY AND STANDARDS CONDITIONS

- 21.12.1 Members received a copy of the University's response to the recent consultation (Document AC 211020L).

21.13 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

All meetings start at 1.45pm and members have the option to participate onsite in Room M416 Marylebone Building or via Microsoft Teams.

Wednesday 8 December 2021

Wednesday 23 February 2022

Wednesday 6 April 2022

Wednesday 22 June 2022