UNIVERSITY OF FORWARD THINKING WESTMINSTER⌗

APPROVED

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ACADEMIC COUNCIL HELD ON WEDNESDAY 21 JUNE 2023 IN ROOM MG38 MARYLEBONE BUILDING AND VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

PRESENT:	Dr Peter Bonfield (Chair)	Caroline Lloyd[1] (Minutes 22.46 and 22.47)
	Abdelhafid Benamraoui	Professor Luke Mason
	Timo Holtappels	Professor Graham Meikle
	Professor Alex Hughes (Deputy Chair)[1]	Dr Andy Pitchford
	Dr Sal Jarvis (Deputy Chair)	Henryetta Simpson
	Professor Janet Jones	Jane Stonestreet
	Professor Malcolm Kirkup	Ben Stringer
	Professor Andrew Linn	Ian Wilmot[2]
IN ATTENDANCE:	Taruna Bangia, UWSU[3]	Elaine McMillan (Secretary)
	David Burt (Clerk)	Dr Margherita Sprio[1 & 4] (from Minute 22.46)
	Mandy Chan (Observer)	Emma Standen
APOLOGIES:	Stephen Bunbury	Dr Kalpana Surendranath
	John Cappock	Professor Harry Thapar
	Tasnim Jammal	Dr Leigh Wilson

22.41 ANNOUNCEMENTS

22.41.1 The Chair welcomed all members and attendees.

22.41.2 The Chair welcomed Mandy Chan – a new member of the Governance team and Taruna Bangia – UWSU President Elect to their first meeting.

22.41.3 All members and attendees introduced themselves to the new attendees.

22.41.4 Members noted apologies as detailed above.

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

22.41.6 The Chair agreed to one request to discuss starred agenda item 15.0 Research units policy (see Minute 22.50) and noted that as members had not approved the Student disciplinary regulations in advance they would be confirmed at the meeting (see Minute 22.49).

22.41.7 The Academic Council Secretary informed members that Stephen Bunbury, an academic representative for the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, had been on leave for more than one semester and gave the reasons for absence.

22.41.8 **AGREED** Members voted unanimously to waive the requirement for membership to cease because of absence for three consecutive meetings and confirmed that Stephen may continue as a member of Academic Council.

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

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[1] Attended via Microsoft Teams
[2] Acting University Secretary and Chief Operating Officer
[3] Substitute for UWSU President
[4] Substitute covering for Dr Leigh Wilson's sabbatical

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

Chair's report

22.41.11　The Chair briefed members on sector issues and developments since the last meeting. This included:

- The change in Government policy that will prevent international postgraduate students from bringing dependents to the UK from January 2024.
- Delay to introduction of the Lifelong Learning Allowance.
- The House of Lords review of the Office for Students.
- The national marking and assessment boycott across the sector.
- Student recruitment for 2023/24.
- University shows and events on equality, diversity and inclusion and the UN Sustainable Development Goals.
- Financial issues across the sector.

22.41.12　The Chair reminded all members and attendees of the purpose of Academic Council and of the University's values.

22.41.13　In response to a member's query, the Chair confirmed that the University is a member of UCEA and noted that it is the responsibility of UCEA and the UCU HE Committee's to reach a resolution to the national dispute.

22.42　REFRESHED EDUCATION STRATEGY

22.42.1　The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (DVC) for Education introduced the refreshed Education Strategy 2023-2029 (Document AC 230621A).

22.42.2　The DVC (Education) highlighted the three core strands of the Strategy - authentic learning; personalised education; and transformative education – and noted that there had been wide consultation during the development of the Strategy.

22.42.3　A member commented that technology included artificial intelligence is important to curriculum design and developing students' confidence and that the globally diverse student body is another key element.

22.42.4　**APPROVED** Education Strategy 2023-2029 to be implemented with immediate effect.

22.43　RESEARCH AND KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE STRATEGY

22.43.1　The Pro Vice-Chancellor (PVC) for Research introduced the new Research and Knowledge Exchange (RKE) Strategy 2022-2029 (Document AC 230621B).

22.43.2　The PVC (Research) highlighted alignment with the Education Strategy and noted that the new Strategy refreshes and combines the Strategy for Research Development and Support and the Knowledge Exchange Strategy.

22.43.3　The PVC (Research) noted that there had been wide consultation during the development of the Strategy and that it would be delivered through the RKE Workstream Charter.

22.43.4　The PVC (Knowledge Exchange) commented that the Strategy aims to differentiate RKE at Westminster from other HE institutions.

22.43.5　In response to a member's query, the PVC (Research) commented on the positive alignment between the new Strategy and the recently published proposals for the Research Excellence Framework exercise in 2028.

22.43.6   In response to a member's query, the PVC (Research) gave an example of an initiative in place to support underrepresented groups.

22.43.7   A member noted that some acronyms were used in the document without first being spelled out and that some links in the document were not live.

22.43.7.1 **ACTION Academic Council Secretary** to add missing acronyms and remove the link references.

22.43.8   In response to a member's query, the PVC (Research) and the DVC (Employability and Global Engagement) explained how the University is supporting research activity at partner institutions, using the Westminster International University in Tashkent as an example.

22.43.9   **APPROVED** Research and Knowledge Exchange Strategy 2022-2029 to be implemented with immediate effect.

22.43.10   The Chair thanked the DVC (Education) and the PVCs for Research and Knowledge Exchange for their work on the two strategies.

22.44   STUDENT VOICE SURVEY

22.44.1   The Chair informed members that this item had been withdrawn[5] and members will discuss performance against the Education KPIs at the next meeting.

22.45   COMMISSIONING BRIEF 2023/24

22.45.1   The Deputy Registrar (Quality and Standards) introduced the proposed commissioning brief (Document AC 230621D), as proposed by the Portfolio Planning Committee (PPC) for entry in 2025.

22.45.2   The DVC (Education) explained that whilst the portfolio planning process does not look at current courses, the PPC is encouraging Course Leaders to consider refreshing, developing and growing existing successful areas.

22.45.3   **APPROVED** Commissioning brief to be implemented from July 2023.

22.46   ACADEMIC REGULATIONS

Exceptional academic regulations – Summer 2023

22.46.1   The Chair and the Academic Registrar summarised the exceptional regulations (Document AC 230621E), which were adopted from April 2023 to mitigate the impact of the UCU marking and assessment boycott and were approved by Chair's action.

22.46.2   The Academic Registrar explained that the regulations are intended to protect quality, to meet regulatory requirements and to ensure students can progress or graduate and reported that the need to apply the regulations would occur in a small minority of cases.

22.46.3   Members held a broad discussion about the regulations and the method of approval, with members expressing differing views.

22.46.4   Members raised the following concerns:

- risks to academic standards and integrity of awards;
- concern for the wellbeing of colleagues and students;
- lack of consultation with colleagues and students prior to approving the regulations;
- lack of benchmarking in the alternative arrangements to External Examiner scrutiny;

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[5] As the item is withdrawn, there was no Document AC 230621C for this meeting.

- students' disappointment at not receiving academic feedback from specific colleagues;
- alignment of the exceptional regulations with existing quality processes; and
- lack of consultation with Academic Council members sets a precedent that diminishes the academic representative role.

22.46.5   Members raised the following points in support of the decision:

- the exceptional regulations mitigate risks to the student experience, student prospects and the financial sustainability of the University;
- extraordinary measures are needed to address extraordinary circumstances;
- the University has an obligation to protect, enable and facilitate students to continue on their course, graduate and progress to employment or further study;
- the small proportion of instances where the exceptional regulations are applied does not represent an attenuation of quality;
- there is a precedent from adoption of exceptional regulations during the COVID-19 pandemic; and
- the exceptional regulations avoid disadvantaging international students who cannot remain in the UK.

22.46.6   In response to members' queries, the Academic Registrar and the Deputy Registrar (Quality and Standards) confirmed:

- the exceptional regulations are not applied where they are prohibited by professional body requirements;
- assignment of a module level mark is a temporary measure; students will receive the actual mark (when it is submitted) if it is higher than the module level mark;
- the majority of HE institutions have introduced exceptional regulations or applied existing exceptional provisions in their regulations in response to the marking and assessment boycott;
- wider consultation was not possible prior to the decision by Chair's action due to the short timescale between agreeing the response to the boycott and establishing the processes and technical solutions needed to apply the exceptional regulations.

22.46.7   Confirming that individuals' votes are confidential and must not be discussed outside the meeting, the Chair requested a vote by show of hands[6] on ratifying the approval of the exceptional regulations. Fourteen members voted in favour and four against. No members abstained.

22.46.8   **RATIFIED** Members confirmed the decision taken by Chair's action to adopt the exceptional regulations for Module Boards and Progression and Award Boards in June 2023.

22.46.9   **AGREED** Academic Council will consider a report on the impact of the exceptional regulations at a future meeting.

22.46.10   Referring to an earlier comment about feedback to students on their performance, a member highlighted that colleagues should support students through the academic feedback process to assist them to process the information.

Academic regulations 2023/24
22.46.11   The Deputy Registrar introduced the proposed academic regulations 2023/24 (Document AC 230621F), as recommended by Teaching Committee.

22.46.12   **APPROVED** Academic regulations 2023/24 to be implemented from 1 August 2023.

Research degree regulations 2023/24

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[6] Only Academic Council members, with the exception of co-opted members, present at the meeting were eligible to vote.

22.46.13   The PVC (Research) and the Acting Director of the Graduate School introduced the proposed research degree regulations 2023/24 (Document AC 230621G), as recommended by the Graduate School Board.

22.46.14   **APPROVED** Research degree regulations 2023/24 to be implemented from 1 August 2023.

22.47   PERSONAL TUTORING POLICY

22.47.1   The DVC (Education) introduced the proposed Personal Tutoring policy (Document AC 230621H), as recommended by the Teaching Committee.

22.47.2   The DVC (Education) thanked Thomas Moore, Chair of the Personal Tutoring Task and Finish Group for their work to develop the revised policy.

22.47.3   The DVC (Education) explained that all Colleges will adopt the Policy from September 2023; however, it will take approximately 18 months to implement all elements of the Policy.

22.47.4   A member noted that some action has already been taken because of the work of the Group, e.g., support meetings on the 'We Thrive' programme for Personal Tutors.

22.47.5   A member commented that the online platform to report interventions is important to prompt and suggested that Course Leaders should be involved in the selection of Personal Tutors as this role impacts on the National Student Survey.

22.47.6   In response to a member's query, the DVC (Education) confirmed that activities validated as part of courses may be mapped on to the We Thrive programme; however, all areas must meet the expectations of the policy to achieve a consistent approach across the University.

22.47.7   A member suggested that it would be beneficial to add taxonimisation of the student support/administrative roles that equally contribute to student success.

22.47.8   In response to a member's queries, the DVC (Education) explained the aim of the Student Success action plans and potential student involvement in the action plans.

22.47.9   In response to a member's query, the DVC (Education) confirmed that the Workload Allocation Model Tariff Group will consider the impact of the policy and there will be a consistent allocation across the University.

22.47.10   **APPROVED** Updated Personal Tutoring policy to be implemented from September 2023.

22.48   MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING AND MATTERS ARISING

22.48.1   **AGREED** Members confirmed the minutes of the Academic Council meeting held on 29 March 2023 (Document AC 230621I) were an accurate record of the meeting.

22.48.2   Members noted that there were no outstanding actions or matters arising from previous meetings.

22.49   STUDENT DISCIPLINARY REGULATIONS

22.49.1   **AGREED** Members recommend the updated Student Disciplinary Regulations and Student Code of Conduct for 2023/24 (Document AC 230621J) to the Court of Governors for approval.

22.50   RESEARCH UNITS POLICY

22.50.1   Members received the updated Research Units policy (Document AC 230621K).

22.50.2   A member noted that some acronyms were used in the document without first being spelled out.

22.50.3   In response to a member's queries, the DVC (Research) confirmed that the need for physical spaces would differ between research centres and that the term 'research lead' replaced 'research leaders' to reflect the function of the roles.

22.50.4   **APPROVED** Updated Research Units policy to be implemented with immediate effect.

22.50.4.1   **ACTION Academic Council Secretary** to add missing acronyms and add 'appropriate' before 'physical space' in the table on page 6.

22.51   VALIDATION AND REVIEW 2022

22.51.1   Members received a report on validations and reviews completed in 2022 (Document AC 230621L), which had been considered by the Teaching Committee.

22.52   COURSE CLOSURES

22.52.1   Members received a list of course closures approved by the Portfolio Planning Committee in 2022/23 (Document AC 230621M).

22.53   ACADEMIC COUNCIL DECISIONS 2022/23

22.53.1   Members received a summary report for communicating Academic Council decisions to sub-committees (Document AC 230621N).

22.53.2   Members noted that decisions taken at this meeting would be confirmed prior to circulation.

22.54   APPRENTICESHIP PROVISION

22.54.1   Members received the latest apprenticeship self-assessment report and quality improvement plan (Document AC 230621O).

22.55   ANY OTHER BUSINESS

22.55.1   Members did not raise any other matters for discussion.

22.56   DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

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

Wednesday 18 October 2023
Wednesday 6 December 2023
Wednesday 21 February 2024
Wednesday 27 March 2024
Wednesday 26 June 2024