

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ACADEMIC COUNCIL HELD ON WEDNESDAY 23 FEBRUARY 2022 VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

PRESENT:	Dr Peter Bonfield (Chair) Stephen Bunbury Zahra Butt, UWSU (from Minute 21.26.7) Matthew Gooderson Savitha Jagannath Dr Sal Jarvis (Deputy Chair) Professor Janet Jones (to Minute 21.31.6) Professor Malcolm Kirkup Dr Nicholas Lambrou Professor Andrew Linn	Caroline Lloyd Professor Luke Mason Professor Graham Meikle Olivia Otts Dr Andy Pitchford Jane Stonestreet Dr Kalpana Surendranath Professor Harry Thapar Ian Wilmot Dr Leigh Wilson (to Minute 21.28.1)
IN ATTENDANCE:	David Burt (Clerk) Mark Humphreys (Minute 21.30) Professor Terry Lamb (Observer)	Elaine McMillan (Secretary) Emma Standen Dr Joy Tweed (Observer)
APOLOGIES:	Abdelhafid Benamraoui John Cappock	Professor Alex Hughes (Deputy Chair)

21.26 ANNOUNCEMENTS

- 21.26.1 The Chair welcomed all members and attendees.
- 21.26.2 The Chair welcomed observers Professor Terry Lamb and Dr Joy Tweed, who were attending as a follow up to their observation of a meeting during the Academic Council membership review. The Chair invited Professor Lamb and Dr Tweed to observe a meeting of Academic Council annually to offer insight on governance practices.
- 21.26.3 Members noted apologies detailed above.
- 21.26.4 Members did not declare any conflict of interest for the business on the agenda.
- 21.26.5 The Chair confirmed that there were no requests to discussed starred items or to raise matters not on the agenda.
- 21.26.6 Members did not submit any questions in advance of the meeting.

Chair's report

- 21.26.7 The Chair briefed members on sector engagement around the Office for Students' (OfS) consultations on the Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (TEF), B3 conditions of registration and the response to the Augar review on Post-18 education and funding.
- 21.26.8 The Chair highlighted the need for Academic Council to steward and advise the University on academic matters to ensure performance, quality and alignment with the University's values and priorities.

21.27 EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION AND EDUCATION

21.27.1 The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (DVC) for Education and the Head of the Centre for Education and Teaching Innovation (CETI) presented on tackling structural inequalities in learning, teaching and assessment at the University (Document AC 220223A).

21.27.1.1 **ACTION Secretary** to publish the presentation slides and video link.

21.27.2 Members discussed the role of Academic Council in tackling structural inequalities. The discussion included the following comments:

- Colleague recruitment and progression processes that target colleagues who are more representative of our diverse student body, particularly for senior academic roles
- Academic Council should ensure that the many different EDI education initiatives and activities cohere, perhaps through a standing item on Academic Council agendas
- The Curriculum Framework approved by Academic Council in December 2021 is a useful tool for revalidation, giving Course Leaders confidence to deliver authentic assessments
- Colleagues need to ensure the 'lived curriculum' – students' learning experience (e.g., through decolonising library collections) – aligns with the written curriculum
- There are lessons from the changes made to assessments during the COVID-19 pandemic and reductions in the attainment gap (being aware of correlation vs causation)
- Academic Council could have a role in collecting and amplifying examples of best practice in the University, perhaps through the annual 'town hall' event¹
- The Academic Council cover sheet could be amended to include a section on how proposals address structural inequalities and enhance diversity and inclusion. If this question is not addressed to the satisfaction of members, Academic Council should return the proposal for further work/clarification
- Hidden structural disadvantage can be perpetuated through replication of practice or process and lack of reflection. To address this Academic Council could require course teams to provide an explicit justification if they propose maintaining the status quo (e.g., retaining elements of courses and programmes) so there is transparent challenge to hidden disadvantage
- Revalidation is a key enabler as it provides opportunity to be positively disruptive and to improve performance and the student experience.

21.28 BEING WESTMINSTER: OUR STRATEGY 2022-29

21.28.1 The Chair presented an overview of the proposed refreshed University Strategy.

21.28.2 A member commented that it is helpful that wellbeing is at the fore in the refreshed Strategy.

21.28.3 A member noted that there is a lot of work to do around employability, which includes changing colleagues and students perceptions of how to embed employability in the curriculum (e.g., moving from the format of CVs and LinkedIn profiles to ensuring high quality content in CVs and profiles).

¹ Academic Council agreed to deliver an annual 'town hall' event as an outcome of the recent membership review

21.29 OFFICE FOR STUDENTS CONSULTATIONS – TEF AND THE B3 CONDITIONS

- 21.29.1 The DVC (Education) and the Deputy Registrar (Quality and Standards) outlined the proposals under consultation relating to the Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (TEF) and the B3 conditions of registration (Document AC 220223B).
- 21.29.2 Members were invited to email comments to the DVC (Education) and the Deputy Registrar to inform the University's responses.
- 21.29.3 The UWSU President reported that UWSU will respond to the consultation directly and will also contribute to the University's response.

21.30 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING AND MATTERS ARISING

- 21.30.1 **AGREED** Members confirmed the minutes of the Academic Council meeting held on 8 December 2021 (Document AC 220223D) are an accurate record of the meeting.
- 21.30.2 Members received and noted an update on actions from previous meetings (Document AC 220223E).
- 21.30.3 **Curriculum framework (Actions 21.16.4.1, 21.16.7.1 and 21.16.8.1):** Members received the amended Curriculum Framework (Document AC 220223E Appendix 1).
- 21.30.4 **Office for Students Strategy 2022-25 consultation (Action 21.17.5.1):** Members received a copy of the University's response to the consultation (Document AC 220223E Appendix 2).
- 21.30.5 **Degree outcome statement (Action 21.9.1.1):** Members noted that the Chair of the Court of Governors took Chair's action to approve publication of the updated statement on the University's website and confirmed that the statement will be reviewed every two years.

21.31 TIMETABLING POLICY

- 21.31.1 The DVC (Education) and the Timetabling Project Lead (Mark Humphreys) presented the proposed policy (Document AC 220223C), which is recommended by the Timetabling Project Board and the Teaching Committee.
- 21.31.2 Members noted the comments that had been submitted in advance via the Decision Time platform.
- 21.31.3 The DVC (Education) noted that most concerns raised related to operational issues and implementation of the policy, and suggested Paragraph 7.2 could explicitly refer to evening tuition for postgraduate courses.
- 21.31.4 The Timetabling Project Manager highlighted that the policy is improved by the inclusion in Paragraph 8.2 of reference to an "*inclusive and accessible learning and working environment*" and reported that the policy will be reviewed when equality impact assessments have been completed.
- 21.31.5 The Timetabling Project Manager explained how the proposed approach to optional modules provides improved choice for students vs a false perception of choice that in practice is restricted by timetable clashes.
- 21.31.6 Members discussed the proposed policy. The discussion included the following comments:
- The priorities of the refreshed Strategy (wellbeing, equality and the Sustainable Development Goals) are relevant to this policy and it needs to be tested against those priorities

- The proposals may work for some Colleges or courses but not for others (e.g., due to different cohort sizes) so should be tested to ensure it can deliver the intended benefits
- Commend the Timetabling Project Board for their work to simplify the policy and support students and an improved student experience
- Heads of School should be asked to apply the policy in practice and review the outcome in terms of the student experience and flexibility of the colleague resource (e.g., teaching across courses and visiting lecturers with other commitments)
- The mitigations outlined in Section 8 come too late in the process and will require significant work as courses will already have been assigned to blocks
- Heads of School could be provided with a draft allocation and given time to model and trial the allocation in consultation with the Assistant Heads of School, Course Leaders, colleagues on fractional contracts and Part Time Visiting Lecturers. The learning from this exercise could be used to improve the policy
- Timetabling of teaching activities should also consider scheduling of time, colleagues and space for research and knowledge exchange activities. The policy could include principles that ensure these activities are not disadvantaged and that does not restrict colleagues with responsibilities for those areas (e.g., College Directors of Research and Knowledge Exchange, Heads of School etc).

- 21.31.7 The Timetabling Project Manager reported that over the next six weeks Directors of College Operations and Timetable Leads within Schools will be looking at allocation of blocks, and cohorts within courses/blocks, and the process will be curriculum led (i.e., identifying which course elements cannot be timetabled at the same time). He noted also that there is already experience in the University of timetabling in blocks.
- 21.31.8 **AGREED** Members confirmed that change is necessary, and a revised policy must be approved no later than April 2022 for implementation from September 2022.
- 21.31.9 **AGREED** Timetabling Project Board to consider the comments raised in the discussion and the outcomes of the planned testing in Colleges and Schools and re-submit the policy to Academic Council for approval in April 2022.
- 21.31.10 Members thanked the Timetabling Project Board for all the work they have done to develop the revised policy.
- 21.31.11 It was suggested that the Timetabling Project Board should review the policy annually to identify what is and is not working well. Members noted that Academic Council will consider revisions prior to the periodic review period if necessary.

21.32 STUDENT DISCIPLINARY PANEL MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

- 21.32.1 **APPROVED** Revised panel membership (Document AC 220223F) to be implemented with immediate effect.

21.33 ANNUAL REPORTS CONSIDERED BY THE TEACHING COMMITTEE

- 21.33.1 Members noted the following reports and the recommendations agreed by the Teaching Committee:
- Academic appeals report 2020/21 (Document AC 220223G)
 - Academic integrity report 2020/21 (Document AC 220223H)
 - Annual monitoring stage 1 report 2020/21 (Document AC 220223I)
 - Litigation report 2021 (Document AC 220223J)

- Student complaints report 2021 (Document AC 220223K)
- Student disciplinary report 2020/21 (Document AC 220223L)

21.34 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

21.34.1 Members did not raise any other matters for discussion.

21.35 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

All meetings start at 1.45pm and take place in Room M416 Marylebone Road (remote participation available).

Wednesday 6 April 2022
Wednesday 22 June 2022

Wednesday 19 October 2022
Wednesday 7 December 2022
Wednesday 22 February 2023
Wednesday 29 March 2023
Wednesday 21 June 2023