

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ACADEMIC COUNCIL HELD ON WEDNESDAY 24 FEBRUARY 2021 VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

PRESENT:	Dr Peter Bonfield (Chair) Tony Burke John Cappock Dr Simon Courtenage Dr Paul Curley Adrian Dutch Professor Alex Hughes (Deputy Chair) Dr Sal Jarvis (Deputy Chair) Professor Janet Jones Professor Malcolm Kirkup	Dr Nicholas Lambrou (from Minute 20.25.2) Professor Andrew Linn Caroline Lloyd Padamjeet Mehta Professor Graham Meikle Jane Stonestreet Professor Harry Thapar Dr Stefan van Dellen Dr Leigh Wilson (to Minute 20.29)
IN ATTENDANCE:	David Burt (Clerk) Ayssar Hanza (Observer) Elaine McMillan (Secretary)	Professor Fiona Ross (Observer) Emma Standen Mei Xin Wang (Observer; to Minute 20.26)
APOLOGIES:	Jordan Blanchard	Vedia Can

20.24 ANNOUNCEMENTS

- 20.24.1 The Chair welcomed all members and regular attendees.
 - 20.24.2 The Chair briefed members on the agenda for the meeting and reminded members of the terms of reference and Code of Conduct for Academic Council.
 - 20.24.3 The Chair welcomed observers Fiona Ross and Mei Xin Wang, who are independent members of the Court of Governors.
 - 20.24.4 The Chair informed members that this would be Tony Burke's final meeting as Head of the Centre for Education and Teaching Innovation and thanked Tony for his contribution to Academic Council.
 - 20.24.5 Members noted apologies as detailed above.
 - 20.24.6 No interests were declared.
 - 20.24.7 The Chair confirmed there were no requests to discuss starred agenda items (Minutes 20.32 to 20.35) or to raise matters not on the agenda.
 - 20.24.8 Members had not submitted any questions in advance of the meeting.
- Chair's report**
- 20.24.9 The Chair gave a summary of the University's response to the lockdown exit plan for England announced by the Government.
 - 20.24.10 The Chair informed members that the University will publish shortly what has been learned from responses to the Winter colleague wellbeing survey.

20.25 FIT FOR THE FUTURE WESTMINSTER GRADUATE

- 20.25.1 The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (DVC) for Education introduced the discussion on the 'fit for the future Westminster Graduate' model developed with the DVC (Employability and Global Engagement) and supported by the University Executive Board (Document AC 210224).
- 20.25.2 Presenters, members and attendees split into five breakout groups¹ to discuss views on the 'three pillars' model, the title of the proposed pillars and how the promise to students is expressed.
- 20.25.3 All presenters, members and attendees returned to the meeting and a member of each group reported a summary of their discussions.
- 20.25.4 Members supported the 'three pillars' model; however, suggested that it would be better visualised as a shape that interconnects and overlaps (e.g. concentric circles, triangle, Venn diagram).
- 20.25.5 Members considered that the terminology used in the titles and descriptors for the proposed pillars needed further work to reflect better the Westminster context, the breadth of outcomes achieved through participation in higher education and language that would resonate with Westminster students.
- 20.25.6 Members commented on other aspects of the process:
- Discussions with students should be the next step to gather their views and check their understanding of the model and the intended meaning of the language used
 - A series of exemplars/student avatars/case histories/living studies could help to communicate the model
- 20.25.7 The DVC (Education) informed members that she and the DVC (Employability and Global Engagement) will reflect on discussions at the meeting, discuss the model with others and present an update to the Teaching Committee prior to its return to Academic Council for approval.

20.26 ACADEMIC COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP REVIEW

- 20.26.1 The Secretary to Academic Council introduced the recommendations from the review of Academic Council membership (Document AC 210224B).
- 20.26.2 Members supported many elements of the recommendations.
- 20.26.3 Members held a broad discussion about the proposed membership structure. Comments included:
- The timing of appointment and training of Student Representatives would impact on participation in the first meeting of Academic Council each year and the increased workload for the elected representative may impact negatively on their studies and other elements of their student experience
 - The membership could be expanded to include more UWSU Sabbatical Officers or UWSU Sabbatical Officers could replace nominated student representatives
 - There is no rationale provided for the limited term of office for elected/nominated members

¹ Breakout groups were facilitated by the DVC (Education); the DVC (Employability and Global Engagement) and the three Pro Vice-Chancellors (PVCs) and Heads of College

- Currently elected academic representatives hold roles at different grades, including Course Leaders and Senior Lecturers
- The process for the Chair's nominees should be included in the proposals
- Roles not included in the proposed reduced ex-officio membership are relevant to challenges facing the University in the future
- Some academic colleagues are members of multiple constituencies so have more opportunities than other colleagues to contribute to the proposed elected membership
- Colleges cover diverse subject areas and two elected representatives per College provides more opportunity to cover more than one subject area
- Building in different layers to the elected membership will increase diversity
- Diversity (e.g. representatives who hold roles at different grades) happens in this iteration of the membership by chance; however, defined constituencies will ensure this is the case in future
- The membership needs to be able to provide assurance to the Court of Governors on academic governance

20.26.4 **POSTPONED** A decision on recommendations to the Court will be considered at the next meeting of Academic Council to allow members the opportunity to discuss the recommendations further and offer alternatives if necessary.

20.27 EDUCATION RECORDING POLICY

20.27.1 The DVC (Education) presented the proposed Policy on the Use of Recording for Educational Purposes (Document AC 210224C), which is recommended by the Teaching Committee.

20.27.2 The DVC Education explained that the proposal is an update to an existing policy, noting that the current policy does not address circumstances where recordings are made of online learning events, which have increased significantly in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

20.27.3 The DVC (Education) emphasised:

- the purpose of the policy to provide inclusive learning opportunities;
- the policy takes account of appropriate legislative frameworks;
- not every session is suitable for recording; and
- there is a need for consistency across the University to support the student experience.

20.27.4 Members proposed that the updated policy should have been discussed with the Union (UCU) prior to submission, noting that discussions had taken place with UCU about principles and content when the current policy was in development. A member noted that he would provide a copy of UCU's concerns to the Academic Council Secretary for circulation to members after the meeting.

20.27.5 A member commented that recording live events will impact negatively on engagement as some students may not contribute if their contributions are to be recorded and some elements of live events (e.g. real-world examples) are not suitable for recorded events. The DVC (Education) referred members to text in the policy that allows colleagues to switch the recording function on and off during the session.

20.27.6 Members raised concerns about employment rights if recordings remain available after an employee leaves the University. The DVC (Education) confirmed that proposals in the policy are in line with University's approach to data storage and that intellectual property rights are codified in the University's Intellectual Property Policy.

20.27.7 Members emphasised the inclusive educational benefits to students, particularly those in difficult circumstances, of being able to access (or re-visit) sessions at a different time than the live session.

20.27.8 A member proposed that each School should keep a record of which sessions have been recorded and, where recordings are not available, how they can access alternative learning material.

20.27.9 **POSTPONED** A decision on the policy will be considered at the next meeting of Academic Council to allow the DVC (Education), the Associate Director, Digital Engagement and Library Services and Teaching Committee an opportunity to reflect on the points raised during the meeting and to discuss the proposed policy with UCU.

20.28 TIMETABLE WORKING GROUP FINAL REPORT

20.28.1 The DVC (Education) presented the final report of the Timetable Working Group (Document AC 210224D), which reports to Academic Council and the University Executive Board.

20.28.2 Members noted the findings of the Working Group, which is defunct and has been replaced by the Timetabling Project Board and three project workstreams.

20.29 REVALIDATION SCHEDULE

20.29.1 The Deputy Registrar (Quality and Standards) presented a proposal to selectively pause the revalidation schedule for 2021 (Document AC 210224E), which is recommended by the Teaching Committee.

20.29.2 Members noted that Schools and Colleges will have the opportunity to continue with revalidations in 2021. For example, where this is required by professional, statutory or regulatory bodies; where planning for revalidations has progressed well already; or where there is a significant need to improve quality and/or the student experience.

20.29.3 Members noted that the requirements to embed work-based and placement learning and year out opportunities within courses must be completed to the agreed timescales using the modifications process.

20.29.4 A member proposed that Schools and Colleges are offered the opportunity to postpone revalidation for a period other than one full year to provide flexibility according to need and capacity.

20.29.5 **AGREED** Members supported the implementation of a revised revalidation schedule, to be agreed by the Teaching Committee at their next meeting.

20.30 ACADEMIC REGULATIONS

20.30.1 The Deputy Registrar (Quality and Standards) presented proposed amendments to Section 14 of the Academic Regulations (Document AC 210224F), which are recommended by the Teaching Committee.

20.30.2 Members noted that the amendments implement recommendations that Teaching Committee and Academic Council have already endorsed following a review of awarding practices.

20.30.3 **APPROVED** Section 14 of the Academic Regulations to be amended with effect from 25 February 2021 to:

a) include '*the School Director of Teaching and Learning, or equivalent*' in the membership of Progression and Award Boards; and

b) replace '*receiving a report from External Examiners relating to the consistency of marking on the module*' with '*reviewing matters arising from the Subject Area meetings and the consideration of the module performance statistics presented at that meeting*' in the terms of reference of Progression and Award Boards.

20.31 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING AND MATTERS ARISING

- 20.31.1 **AGREED** Minutes of the Academic Council meeting held on 9 December 2020 (Document AC 210224G) are an accurate record of the meeting.
- 20.31.2 Members received and noted an update on actions from previous meetings (Document AC 210224H).
- 20.31.3 **Office for Students consultation on regulation of quality and standards (Action 20.17.2.1)** Members received a copy of the consultation response (Document AC 210224H Appendix).
- 20.31.4 **Structure of the Academic Calendar (Action 20.18.5.1)** The Academic Registrar confirmed that he had addressed the query about inclusion of courses with bespoke arrangements in the list submitted to the Teaching Committee.
- 20.31.5 **RATIFIED Reintroduction of exceptional regulations for 2020/21 (Document AC 210224I)** Members supported the decision taken by Chair's action to reintroduce the following exceptional regulations for the 2020/21 academic year:
- To extend 5.1.4 of Section 17 to allow undergraduate students to progress having only achieved 80 credits rather than 100 credits. This would increase the maximum number of credits students could take in an academic year to 160.
 - To amend 7.3.2 of Section 17 to allow award classifications for current level 6 students to be made on the best 200 credits at level 5 and 6 rather than 220 credits.
 - To amend Section 18 to allow award classifications for current level 7 students to be made on the best 160 credits rather than 180 credits.
 - Course Specific Regulation for undergraduate law courses as approved by Academic Council in October 2020 (refer to Minutes 20.4.11 and 20.4.12).
- 20.31.6 **RATIFIED Academic regulations for postgraduate students (Document AC 210224I)** Members supported the decision taken by Chair's action to allow postgraduate students who started in January 2020 to have their awards classified using 160 credits rather than 180 credits.

20.32 GOOD HONOURS REPORT

- 20.32.1 Members received the report on Good Honours data trends up to 2019-20 (Document AC 210224J).

20.33 ANNUAL REPORTS CONSIDERED BY THE TEACHING COMMITTEE

- 20.33.1 Members received the following annual reports and noted the recommendations:
- Academic appeals report 2019/20 (Document AC 210224K)
 - Academic integrity report 2019/20 (Document AC 210224L)
 - Student complaints report 2020 (Document AC 210224M)
 - Student disciplinary report 2019/20 (Document AC 210224N)
 - Annual monitoring stage 1 report 2019/20 (Document AC 210224O)
 - External Examiners report 2019/20 (Document AC 210224P)
 - Litigation report 2020 (Document AC 210224Q)

20.34 SUB-COMMITTEE BUSINESS

- 20.34.1 Members received a report on the business conducted at meetings of the following sub-committees since the last meeting of Academic Council (Document AC 210224R):
- i. Course Validation Standing Panel – 25 November 2020
 - ii. Teaching Committee – 20 January 2021

- iii. Graduate School Board – 27 January 2021
- iv. Student Experience Committee – 27 January 2021

20.34.2 Members noted that draft minutes from the Research Committee meeting on 10 February 2021 were not available in time for inclusion in the report; the draft minutes will be available via the Reading Room on receipt.

20.35 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

All meetings start at 1.45pm and will be conducted via Microsoft Teams until further notice.

Wednesday 7 April 2021
Wednesday 23 June 2021

Wednesday 20 October 2021
Wednesday 8 December 2021
Wednesday 23 February 2022
Wednesday 6 April 2022
Wednesday 22 June 2022

20.36 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Attendance at Academic Council meetings

20.36.1 The Secretary informed members that one of the student representatives had missed four consecutive meetings and informed members of the reasons for these absences.

20.36.2 With reference to the Academic Council standing orders, the Chair called a vote on whether to waive the requirement for her membership to cease.

20.36.3 Members voted unanimously to waive the requirement and confirmed the student representative's membership will continue to the end of her term of office.

Evaluation of the meeting

20.36.4 At the invitation of the Chair, independent governor Professor Fiona Ross gave feedback on the conduct of the meeting. She commented that the meeting was inclusive, there was a lot of participation and challenge, and that she was confident that issues raised by members would be dealt with in follow-up discussions.

20.36.5 In response to the Chair, the UWSU President noted that it was unfortunate that neither nominated student representatives were able to attend the meeting; however, he considered that the student voice had been heard in discussions.

20.36.6 The Chair thanked everyone for their contribution and challenge, which came from diverse perspectives.