UNIVERSITY OF FORWARD THINKING WESTMINSTER⌗

APPROVED

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF ACADEMIC COUNCIL HELD ON WEDNESDAY 3 DECEMBER 2025 IN CHILTERN HALL, MARYLEBONE BUILDING

PRESENT:		
	Professor Peter Bonfield (Chair)	Dr Paul Kendall
	Jessica Adebanjo	Frantzeska Kolyda
	Professor Dibyesh Anand	Professor Andrew Linn
	David Burt (Clerk)	Adil Musani
	Linsey Cole	Jeanette Nicholas
	Anne-Gaelle Colom	Catherine O'Connor
	Neil Donohue	Dr Andy Pitchford
	Professor Catherine Dormor (from Minute 25.1.10)	Henryetta Simpson
	Emma Elkington	Dr Margherita Sprio
	Amber Ella	Dr Pinar Uysal Onganer
	Professor Christos Kalantaridis	Dr Natasha Whiteman

IN ATTENDANCE:		
	Andrea Bertone (Observer)	Morgan Lirette (Minute 25.14)
	Kitty Brown (Minute 25.12)	Fabia Hannan Mone (Observer)
	Mandy Chan (Secretary)	Gemma Sherry (Minute 25.12)
	Komiljon Karimov (Observer)	Rebecca Shonfeld (Observer)

APOLOGIES:		
	Dr Felicity Hardley	Kaushika Patel
	Sruthi Konda	Ian Wilmot

25.11 ANNOUNCEMENTS

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

- Catherine O'Connor – Deputy Vice-Chancellor (DVC), Education (ex-officio member and Deputy Chair of Academic Council)
- Komiljon Karimov – Rector of Westminster International University in Tashkent (WIUT)
- Andrea Bertone – Independent Governor
- Rebecca Shonfeld and Fabia Hannan Mone – Participants of Academic Council Shadowing Scheme.

25.11.2 All members and attendees introduced themselves.

25.11.3 Members noted apologies as recorded above.

25.11.4 The Chair reminded members of Academic Council's role as the University's supreme academic body and emphasised inclusive and respectful meeting conduct.

25.11.5 The Chair confirmed that there were no requests to discuss starred agenda items (Minutes 25.18 to 25.22) and outlined the purpose of the Starred Items section, as well as the procedure for un-starring items and raising other matters not on the agenda.

Chair's report

25.11.6 The Chair invited the Rector of WIUT and the DVC (Education) to share some reflections with members.

25.11.7 The Rector of WIUT highlighted WIUT's rapid rise in Central Asia, its strong regional reputation, strategic partnership with the University and the focus on expanding impact, innovation and sustainable development.

25.11.8   The Vice-Chancellor noted the Rector's transformative contribution to Uzbekistan's higher education, promoting access, equity, international partnerships, and sustainable and ethical leadership.

25.11.9   The DVC (Education), reflecting on her first five weeks, reported strong alignment with the Education Strategy and highlighted opportunities from the mid-term review and upcoming regulatory requirements to enhance student outcomes through a coordinated, student-centred approach within the University's vibrant eco-system.

25.12   MID-TERM REVIEW – BEING WESTMINSTER

25.12.1   Kitty Brown – Director of Strategy, Planning and Performance (SPP) – presented a briefing on the mid-term review (Document AC 251203A1), outlining external challenges, internal consultations, three emerging themes and pillars, and draft goals for 2029.

25.12.2   Gemma Sherry – Strategic Planning Manager (SPM) – invited members to participate in a breakout exercise to review the goals against current progress and explore future priorities.

25.12.3   Members engaged in group discussions and shared observations during the debrief. In general, members opined that the University remains midway toward the goals and additional efforts will be required to reach the desired outcomes. Key observations included:

Goal 1: Excellence
- Strong achievements and enthusiasm in teaching and research but inconsistent performance.
- Operational challenges and gaps in metrics for measuring excellence, better coordination and alignment are needed to maximise impact.

Goal 2: Equity
- Positive efforts for colleagues and students with special needs, with ongoing concerns about tangible impact and access.
- Improved academic support structures and professional development are needed to ensure equitable outcomes.
- A supportive culture, confidence-building and effective communication are essential to encourage participation, foster innovation, enable risk-taking and build external networks.

Goal 3: Engagement
- Engagement is challenged by workload pressures, unclear priorities and multiple concurrent activities.
- Aligning energy, focusing on key initiatives, connecting efforts across areas and creating a supportive environment are essential to enhance both excellence and engagement.

Other observations
- Participants highlighted culture as a key area, balancing busy work with support for both students and colleagues, and fostering reflection, dialogue and shared learning.
- Clarity in language around equity and engagement is necessary for consistency and shared understanding.
- The goals should embed risk-taking and actively champion innovation.

25.12.4   The SPM encouraged members to provide feedback directly to the mid-term review team, emphasising the importance of ongoing dialogues, and noted that additional engagement sessions will be held.

25.12.5   The Chair thanked the team for leading the workshop and emphasised aligning teaching with future job needs, engaging employers, addressing emerging challenges, and improving teaching quality and student confidence.

25.12.6   The Chair also highlighted the value of increasing on-the-ground engagement to identify gaps, sustain momentum and focus collective efforts on priority improvements.

25.13   NEW ACADEMIC CALENDAR MODEL IMPLEMENTATION REPORT

25.13.1   The Chair noted that this report follows last year's approval of the new Academic Calendar model and provides mid-implementation progress.

25.13.2   David Burt – Academic Registrar – presented the implementation report (Document AC 251203A) and assured Council that progress remains on track, with no significant issues anticipated.

25.13.3   For impact measurement, the Academic Registrar highlighted the challenges in evidencing clear outcomes due to limited baseline data, multiple influencing factors and the small size of the initial cohorts.

25.13.4   Members discussed the report and suggested:

- Using indicators such as Level 6 refer/defer progression and international student visa compliance for impact measurement.
- Considering flexible deadlines or earlier Semester 2 discussions between module leaders and students to mitigate workload bottlenecks and wellbeing issues arising from the new refer/defer process.
- Research showing higher engagement in resits when held closer to teaching, raising questions about student support and the need for further discussion with academic teams.
- Enhancing first-sit pass rate to reduce mitigations and ease workload under the new model.

25.13.5   The Academic Registrar thanked members for sharing their observations, reiterated the requirement to adhere to the Academic Calendar, and noted positive feedback from the student representatives on the working groups.

25.13.6   The Chair proposed annual reporting on the implementation of the new Academic Calendar model to support Academic Council's oversight on the implementation and the impact on student outcomes.

25.13.6.1   **ACTION Academic Registrar** to submit an annual implementation report from 2026-27 onwards.

25.14   HALF-YEARLY PROGRESS UPDATE OF THE EDUCATION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (ESD) ACTION PLAN

25.14.1   Andy Pitchford – Head of the Centre for Education and Teaching Innovation (CETI), and Morgan Lirette – Sustainable Development Advisor, presented the half-yearly progress report on the ESD Action Plan (Document AC 251203B), noting positive developments across all areas and thanked colleagues for their support during the process.

25.14.2   For the next phase of the ESD implementation,

- Members are invited to participate in an in-depth assessment of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) integration within the curriculum to guide future work.
- Members recommended prioritising priority courses for graduate outcomes and referencing Westminster Business School's AACSB (Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business) metrics as initial benchmarks for the assessment.

25.14.3   The Chair emphasised the strategic role of the SDGs in advancing equity, aligning with the University's commitment to equity (Minute 25.12.3), and in empowering students to contribute to a sustainable and fair future.

25.14.4   A member highlighted the importance of consistency and the sharing of good practices in the ESD process, noting WIUT's full integration of the SDGs and underscoring the value of mutual learning with partners.

25.14.5 The Chair expressed appreciation to the team and commended the strong momentum and effectiveness demonstrated in embedding the SDGs across the University.

25.15 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING AND MATTERS ARISING

25.15.1 **AGREED** Members confirmed the minutes of Academic Council meeting held on 15 October 2025 (Document AC 251203C) were an accurate record of the meeting.

25.15.2 Members noted the summary of progress against actions arising from the previous meeting (Document AC 251203D) and confirmed the completed items.

25.16 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

25.16.1 Members did not raise any other matters for discussion.

25.17 MEETING EVALUATION

25.17.1 Participants shared the following feedback on the meeting:

- A welcoming and respectful environment with open dialogue, constructive challenge and balanced participation.
- The meeting etiquette introduced at the start was viewed as a useful model for wider practice.
- Positive reflections on the workshop and breakout activities with coherent themes identified; while emphasising the need to clarify next steps, address concerns raised and ensure future actions balance effort with impact.

25.17.2 The Chair welcomed the feedback and suggested future workshop sessions should place greater emphasis on the 'next steps' to inform Council discussions and oversight.

25.18 REFRESHED ADMISSIONS POLICY

25.18.1 **APPROVED** Refreshed Admissions Policy (Document AC 251203E) to be implemented with immediate effect.

25.19 POLICY IN RELATION TO THE SAFE USE OF GENERATIVE AI

25.19.1 **APPROVED** Updated Policy in relation to the Safe Use of Generative AI and the revised governance route for the Policy (Document AC 251203F) to be implemented with immediate effect.

25.20 TERMS OF REFERENCE OF SUBCOMMITTEES

25.20.1 **APPROVED** Updated terms of reference and membership for the Student Voice Forum (Document AC 251203G) to be implemented with immediate effect.

25.20.2 **APPROVED** Updated terms of reference and membership for the Research and Knowledge Exchange Steering Committee (Document AC 251203H) to be implemented with immediate effect.

25.20.3 **APPROVED** Updated terms of reference and membership for the Course Validation Standing Panels (Document AC 251203I) to be implemented with immediate effect.

25.20.4 **APPROVED** Updated terms of reference and membership for the Portfolio Planning Committee (Document AC 251203J) to be implemented with immediate effect.

25.21   APPRENTICESHIPS UPDATE

25.21.1   Members noted the update on apprenticeship provision since April 2025 (Document AC 251203K).

25.22   DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

All meetings start at 1.45pm and take place at Chiltern Hall, Marylebone campus.

Wednesday 25 February 2026
Wednesday 15 April 2026
Wednesday 24 June 2026