

**APPROVED**

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF ACADEMIC COUNCIL HELD ON WEDNESDAY 25 FEBRUARY 2026 IN  
CHILTERN HALL, MARYLEBONE BUILDING**

PRESENT:	Professor Peter Bonfield (Chair) Jessica Adebajo Professor Dibyesh Anand David Burt (Clerk) Neil Donohue Professor Catherine Dormor Amber Ella Dr Felicity Hardley Professor Christos Kalantaridis Dr Paul Kendall Frantzeska Kolyda	Professor Andrew Linn Adil Musani Jeanette Nicholas Professor Catherine O'Connor (Deputy Chair) Kaushika Patel Dr Andy Pitchford Henryetta Simpson Dr Pinar Uysal Onganer Dr Natasha Whiteman Ian Wilmot
IN ATTENDANCE:	John Ball (Governor/Observer) (from Minute 25.24) Caron Bradshaw (Governor) Professor Franz Buscha (Minutes 25.23 to 25.24) Mandy Chan (Secretary) Dr Deborah Husbands (Minutes 25.25 to 25.28) Nisha Kanwar (Observer)	Amina Mahmood (Observer) Elaine McMillan (Clerk to the Court) Fabia Hannan Mone (Observer) Clare Peterson (Minutes 25.25 to 25.28) Gemma Sherry (Minute 25.24) Professor Gregory Sporton (Minutes 25.23 to 25.24) Zahrah Surooprajally Muriel Swijghuisen Reigersberg
APOLOGIES:	Linsey Cole Dr Emma Elkington	Dr Margherita Sprio

**25.23 ANNOUNCEMENTS**

- 25.23.1 The Chair welcomed all members and attendees, outlined the meeting agenda, and highlighted meeting etiquette to ensure inclusive and supportive discussion.
- 25.23.2 All members and attendees introduced themselves.
- 25.23.3 Members noted apologies as recorded above.
- 25.23.4 The Chair advised that a call for nominations would be launched to fill a membership vacancy, following the departure of an elected academic member due to a change of role.
- 25.23.5 The Chair confirmed that there were no requests to discuss starred agenda items (Minutes 25.29 to 25.31).

**Chair's report**

- 25.23.6 The Chair briefed members on the Being Westminster strategy mid-term review, highlighting the three pillars of educational excellence, equity, and employment and employability, with research and knowledge exchange, wellbeing and inclusion, sustainability and artificial intelligence as cross-cutting values.
- 25.23.7 The Chair emphasised that the University would sustain momentum towards excellence despite external challenges.

**25.24 BEING WESTMINSTER MID-TERM REVIEW – RESEARCH AND KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE (RKE) STRATEGY ‘MAKING A DIFFERENCE’**

25.24.1 Andrew Linn – Deputy Vice-Chancellor (DVC) for RKE – presented the mid-term review for the RKE Strategy ‘Making a Difference’ (Document AC 260225A).

25.24.2 Members engaged in group discussions and shared observations during the debrief. Key points included:

**Celebrating recent achievements in RKE**

- Strong focus on student research, authenticity, and assessment design.
- Readers and Professors promotion arrangements highlighted good practice.
- Increased visible research support at institutional and College levels through established roles.
- A student member shared positive experience of engaging in research and participating in the research community.

**Supporting and strengthening RKE aligned with the three pillars**

**Integration and profile**

- Improve integration of RKE into global engagement activities.
- Raise the profile of knowledge exchange across the University.
- Recognition that research informs multiple University activities beyond formal research roles.
- Clear communication that all RKE elements contribute to institutional goals.

**Process and support**

- Operational and process reforms to ensure researchers are well-supported and procedures are clear and efficient.
- Consideration of workload and equitable resource allocation for researchers across career stages.

**Career development and scholarship**

- Focus on early-career, first-time and mid-career researchers, with mid-career researchers as a priority focus.
- Emphasis on research scholarship, recognising all colleagues as researchers and continuous learners, with scholarships embedded in the RKE Strategy for everyone.

**Good practice and community**

- Capture, share and scale good practices across disciplines to ensure all students feel part of the University’s research communities.

25.24.3 The DVC (RKE) thanked members for the thoughtful discussion, noting that he would take forward insights from the discussion and reflect them in the mid-term review report.

25.24.4 The Chair highlighted that future follow-up sessions would help translate these insights into tangible, deliverable actions and outcomes.

**25.25 BEING WESTMINSTER MID-TERM REVIEW – EDI (EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION) IN EVERYDAY LIFE**

25.25.1 Dibyesh Anand – DVC (Global Engagement and Employability), Deborah Husbands – EDI Committee Co-Chair, Clare Peterson – EDI Manager and Zahrah Surooprajally – Events Manager and EDI Programme Coordinator – delivered a presentation on ‘Moving Beyond the EDI Strategy – Embedding EDI in our Everyday Life’, covering how EDI links to the University priorities, Colleague Networks, EDI governance, and culture change through student empowerment programmes.

25.25.2 Members engaged in group discussions guided by the pre-circulated questions (Document AC 260225B), focusing on actions to advance EDI within the University. Key points included:

- The University should be vocal, confident and visible in promoting EDI, even in challenging external contexts.
- Academic freedom tensions - including free speech, classroom debate and recording - should be addressed through education on responsible disagreement, respectful engagement and legal/ethical boundaries, integrated into the teaching and employability development.
- Student support challenges - such as non-standard start times and caring/health responsibilities - can affect cohort cohesion, attendance and progression; scaffolded support, structured induction, inclusive timetabling and proactive planning can help all students succeed.
- Authentic assessment should be balanced within disciplines to avoid being too narrow or too broad.
- Championing EDI requires making work visible and recognised, role-modelling inclusive behaviours, ensuring all in our community feel they matter, and fostering a culture of belonging and recognition.
- Consider making the EDI annual report more interactive, such as via video.

25.25.3 The DVC (Global Engagement and Employability) thanked members for the contribution, emphasising that inclusion requires diversity, equity and partnership, and that progress is achieved collectively and step by step. Members were invited to reach out to the presenters to provide further ideas and input.

25.25.4 The Vice-Chancellor highlighted the importance of freedom of speech, noting the sector-wide caution around controversial issues, and emphasised that the University should confidently uphold its values and responsibly engage with challenging topics.

## **25.26 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING AND MATTERS ARISING**

25.26.1 **AGREED** Members confirmed the minutes of Academic Council meeting held on 3 December 2025 (Document AC 260225C) were an accurate record of the meeting.

25.26.2 Members noted the summary of progress against actions arising from the previous meeting (Document AC 260225D).

25.26.3 Members noted that the Academic Council Chair approved the latest version of the Timetabling Policy, incorporating changes requested by Academic Council on 2 April 2025, following support for the updated text by Teaching Committee members via circulation<sup>1</sup>.

## **25.27 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

25.27.1 Members did not raise any other matters for discussion.

## **25.28 MEETING EVALUATION**

25.28.1 An observer reflected that the meeting was engaging, insightful and enjoyable, highlighting its value in connecting University activities, external collaborations and supporting their role at the University.

## **25.29 ANNUAL REPORTS CONSIDERED BY THE TEACHING COMMITTEE**

25.29.1 Members noted the following reports and accepted the recommendations made by the Teaching Committee:

- Annual external examiners report 2024-25 (Document AC 260225E)
- Annual academic integrity report 2024-25 (Document AC 260225F)

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<sup>1</sup> **Post-meeting note:** The Head of Space Management and Timetabling confirmed by email after the meeting that colleagues had implemented the refreshed policy for the 2025/26 academic year, therefore the Chair's approval of the policy was retrospective.

- Annual academic appeals report 2024-25 (Document AC 260225G)

25.29.2 **AGREED** Members recommend the annual student disciplinary report 2024-25 (Document AC 260225H) to the Court of Governors.

### **25.30 RATIFICATION OF DECISIONS BY CIRCULATION**

25.30.1 **RATIFIED** Members confirmed the following decisions taken by the Chair between meetings (Document RES 260225I):

- Approval of the Code of Research Good Practice (the Code) and the Procedure for the Investigation into Misconduct in Research (the Procedure).
- Adoption of a revised governance route delegating future approval of the Code and Procedure to the RKE Steering Committee.
- Approval of an exceptional one-off exemption from the course-specific regulation for 2025-26 to run two in-class tests during the examination period.

### **25.31 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

All meetings start at 1.45pm and take place onsite.

Wednesday 15 April 2026

Wednesday 24 June 2026